John D. Robins

THROWN IN

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BY

NEWTON
MacTAVISH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
J. D. LOGAN, Ph. D., Hon. Litt. D.

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INTRODUCTION

By J. D. Logan, Ph.D., Hon. Litt. D.

Lecturer on Canadian Literature, Acadia University

THAT Canadians have no genius for creative humour and that Canada possesses no significant indigenous literature of humour are uncritical beliefs, virtually superstitions, which obtain both in foreign countries and in the Dominion itself. It is quite the fault of Canadians themselves that these superstitions should obtain. What Canadian literary critic or historian has observed that the multifold humorous writings of Thomas Chandler Haliburton are not the only examples of genuine and significant humorous literature produced in Canada; that the name and work of Haliburton has drawn attention away from the names and work of such engaging and satisfying Canadian humourists as Joseph Howe, James De Mille, George T. Lanigan, who, with Haliburton, were the humourists of Pre-Confederation days in British North America? What literary critic or historian in Canada or other country has remarked the "long line" of Post-Confederation humourists which the Dominion has produced—William Henry Drummond, Sara Jeanette Duncan (Mrs. Cotes), and (in the twentieth century) Stephen Leacock, Peter McArthur, P. O. Donovan, George Ham, Robert Service, Roy Davis—and Newton MacTavish? What Canadian has done for Canadian humourists and

humour a service similar to that done by Mark Twain, who compiled and edited a "Library of American Humour"? True, Mr. Lawrence J. Burpee compiled in the second decade of the current century, a *bijou* anthology of examples of Canadian humour ("Humour of the North"). Grateful as we are for this service to our literature, there is still wanting what can be readily compiled and critically edited, namely, "A library of Canadian Humour". Finally, what Canadian literary critic has, even in magazine essays, recounted the history of creative humour in Canada, distinguished the genius and qualities even of Haliburton and Leacock, or signalized the renaissance of the Haliburton satiric humour in Canada or the advent of a new kind of Canadian humourist? Yet the truth is that the spirit of Haliburton's satiric humour is operant in the verse of Mr. Roy Davis; and a new species of creative humour has appeared in the writings of Mr. Newton MacTavish. Moreover, the truth is that James De Mille anticipated Mark Twain's revival of the Franklinian or true American humour and that De Mille, not Mark Twain, must be regarded as the "father" of Stephen Leacock as a humourist.

W. H. Drummond gave to the world a genuinely new species of Canadian humour—in verse; Mrs. Cotes, a genuinely new species of Canadian humour—in prose. Both Drummond and Mrs. Cotes have passed. Other humourists have arisen in Canada and are "carrying on". But of these only two are writing with fresh and original authentic genius—namely, Roy Davis, in verse, and Newton MacTavish, in prose.

Mr. MacTavish must be given a significant place in the literary history of Canada. When, about sixteen years ago, he became editor of *The Canadian Magazine,* he at once set about to foster the fine arts, including literature, in Canada. He opened, without reservation, the pages of *The Canadian Maga-*

zine to a band of native-born Canadians who applied constructive criticism to Canadian literature in order to get the best of it recognized as a body æsthetically satisfying or respectable literature as such, and to have Canadian literature included in the general survey of English literature in our Canadian colleges and universities. Both these ends have been realized; and to Mr. MacTavish, as editor, must go most of the glory of the achievement. In recognition of his part in promoting the study of Canadian literature in our universities, Acadia University conferred on him the honorary degree of Master of Arts. But greater is the distinction which is deservedly his, namely, of having loyally supported the "cause" of Canadian letters until to-day there are at least five Canadian universities offering systematic courses or half-courses in Canadian literature. I turn now to remark his genius as an original creative humourist and the distinguishing qualities of his humour as they appear in the volume in hand, *Thrown In*.

Whatever compliments we must pay to Mr. Leacock, it must be said that his humour is a recrudescence of the American method of humour, and that it does not embody or express the national spirit of Canada as such. It is Canadian only in the sense that the most of it has been written in Canada by one whom Mr. T. G. Marquis has noted as "a graft on the Canadian literary tree". Moreover, Mr. Leacock's humour is not even authentic "comic criticism" but rather satiric burlesque (for the most part), and it is enjoyed in Canada and the United States because, first, the bases of at least the ephemeral culture of both countries is identical, and, because, secondly, it is, in spirit, Mark Twainian. Mr. Leacock's humour is really along the line of "scream comedy", and is neither genuine satiric comedy or comic criticism of

society, nor is it genuine humour, that is, the humour which clears the vision so that the inward eye sees the futility of taking the universe too seriously, and the heart is thereby comforted or supported in, as Chesterton says, "the best of all impossible worlds". Mr. Leacock's humour is not original either in conception of the substance and meaning of humour in method.

Mr. MacTavish, on the other hand, is original both in conception and in method. First of all, he is embodying and expressing the Canadian national spirit. What he has written in *Thrown In* is strictly of the Canadian soil—revealments of the peculiar Canadian attitudes to Good and Evil in the universe, attitudes that were and remain real in Canadian civilization and culture. Again: Mr. MacTavish, on the side of creative form, has given the Humorous Essay in Canada a new meaning and power by raising it to a plane of authentic literary and spiritual dignity. Once more: Mr. MacTavish contrives an original combination of wit and humour, and tends to wit rather than humour. By wit is meant the turning of the light of truth upon human psychology by way of situation and of character, coloured and illuminated by anecdotal humour. So that the reader is first entertained or diverted, only suddenly, as he reads, to discover that the humourist has flashed the searching light of the intellect and imagination on the heart and ways—the essential heart and ways—of humankind; and lo! the reader sees the absolute *humanity* of the very creatures who excite his smiles and chuckles and gentle laughter. Mr. Leacock's humour does not humanize us. Mr. MacTavish's humour does humanize us, and, what is better, wins us to love the lowliest of our fellows.

In *Thrown In* Mr. MacTavish achieves a novel dis-

tinction in literary style. The peculiarity of his style lies in an original sentential movement—a sort of "swinging" tendency from one sentence to another, and such that the final sentence of a paragraph also "swings" into the first sentence of the next paragraph. The result is that the reader is carried along in a way that achieves structurally what would also be achieved by expectancy of something freshly entertaining. In short, the mechanical sentential structure of the style assists the psychological movement caused by expectancy, and the combination makes sustained reading both inevitable and naturally easy.

As to the substance and method of *Thrown In*: Mr. MacTavish has raised the Humorous Essay to the dignity of literature. The essays in this volume are consistently humorous without any descent to the lower level of the comical, and they are amusing without being grotesque. Moreover: while treating homely matters and simple characters (Canadian) with delightful urbanity, these essays have many subtle philosophical touches, as, for instance in "The Agnostic" and "The Source". In them, too, are many passages that arrest the reader, hush the spirit, and cause him to think deeply and to realize both that he has come from God and is going to God. This is especially true of "The Graveyard" and "The Log House". In short, *Thrown In* is a series of highly original Humorous Essays which have the distinction of being authentic Literature. It is unique in its kind and a fresh contribution to Canadian Literature.

Acadia University,
Wolfville, Nova Scotia,

October 12, 1923.

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THROWN IN

CHAPTER I

The Good Old Days

THIRTY years ago the storekeepers used to throw in a pair of braces with every suit of clothes. If the suit cost as much as fifteen or twenty dollars you stood a chance of getting a necktie into the bargain or a pair of kid gloves for the missis. Of course that was in the days when braces were not a luxury and when real kid gloves at a dollar a pair could be seen on the street every Sunday. If the missis bought stuff for a dress, silk or cashmere or henrietta, it was common knowledge that the thread and buttons and the lining and the binding for the bottom of the skirt would be thrown in. As to that, there never was any wrangling. Whatever wrangling took place it was during the negotiations for the purchase of the stuff itself. It was your privilege, and in particular the privilege of every woman, to beat down the price. If the storekeeper asked a dollar and a quarter for silk that could not be bought to-day for three dollars you would be regarded as a pretty easy mark if you could not haggle until the price would be reduced to one-fifteen, which very likely, after all, would be the storekeeper's inside figure.

Those were the days when everybody asked more and took less. All kinds of small merchandise were thrown in to clinch a bargain or to induce you to come back again. If it wasn't a box of paper collars, it might be a straw hat or a

silk handkerchief with an initial letter done in colours on one corner. But everybody hoped to get something for nothing, and I am not sure that everybody's hope has changed from that time to this.

Perhaps it is the high cost of living to-day that causes me to think of the value of commodities of trade thirty to forty years ago. In Huron county, which was, I suppose, an average county in Ontario, we used to believe that butter at sixteen cents a pound was almost as high as sometimes it smelt. Eggs were common tender at one cent apiece. Indeed, butter and eggs set the standard of values. A dozen eggs would buy a yard of shirting, and a pound of butter was worth three pounds of granulated sugar. Now, however, a dozen eggs will buy almost two yards of shirting, and a pound of butter is worth four pounds of sugar. All these everyday commodities have advanced greatly in price, but the butter and the eggs have advanced more than the shirting or the sugar.

I am reminded of the old Scotsman whose wife sent him to the store to get an egg's worth of darning-needles. In those days the general store prevailed, and the stock in trade frequently included whiskey and other strong liquors. The storekeeper whom the Scotsman approached had "given out" that he would treat every customer. Sandy obtained the needles, then waited with some patience for the treat. At length he was constrained to remark:

"I'm hearin' ye're giein' a treat to every customer."

"You'd hardly expect a treat with an egg's worth of darning-needles," the storekeeper replied.

"Ah, weel, bit ye canna draw the line too close—a customer's a customer."

"All right. What'll you have?"

"I'll take a bit whiskey."

The storekeeper poured out a horn of whiskey and laid it on the counter.

"I'm used to haein' a bit sugar in it," said Sandy, smacking his lips.

The storekeeper opened the bin and dropped a lump of sugar into the glass.

Sandy looked at the concoction, hesitated a moment, and then spoke again.

"I'm used to haein' an egg in it," he ventured.

The storekeeper reached behind and took from a shelf the very egg that Sandy had traded. He broke the shell and let the contents drop into the glass. And, wonderful to behold, there were two yolks. Sandy looked on, and a smile of satisfaction came to his face as he raised the glass to his lips.

"I'm thinkin'," he said, "there's anither egg's worth o' needles comin' to me."

I suppose there are good reasons why the things that came into town for use and consumption by the townspeople and farmers have not advanced in price proportionately as much as the things that were hauled in by the farmers. The economic system has changed, as well as the means of transportation and the facilities for shipment abroad. In those days a few farmers sold milk to the cheese factories, but the exchange for it, either in cheese or cash or whey, but mostly in all three, was just enough to be an aggravation. Creameries such as operate to-day all over the country were unknown, and their splendid products were yet to bless a later generation. And while butter was common barter, there was no standard of quality. All went at one price, for no storekeeper could give Mrs. Jones fifteen cents in trade for

butter, and Mrs. Brown only fourteen cents, and go on keeping store. Whether Mrs. Brown's butter was the best or the worst, she received fifteen cents for it in barter, just the same as all the others. The theory was, literally, that all butter is born equal, which is the same as to say that all customers must be treated as if equal. Here, then, in a crude sense, was the equality factor in Socialism put into practice. But it was a practice that could not last, for while it prevails to a very slight extent in some places, even to-day, it is not the basis of trade in our towns as it used to be.

I have remarked that the butter was not all of standard quality. Some of it was not as good as it looked. I recall one woman who used all her own butter on her own table. But one unfortunate day she discovered a dead mouse in the crock of cream. Not daunted, however, she did the usual churning and produced a fine-looking roll of butter. But she couldn't eat it herself. She knew the butter was really all right and would taste good to anyone who did not know about the mouse. So she took it to the storekeeper, told him the truth, and asked whether he would exchange it for a roll from his cellar.

"You know," she said, making a slight misquotation, "for what the mind doesn't know the heart won't grieve for."

"Oh, that's all right," said the obliging storekeeper, "I'm pleased to accommodate you."

He disappeared into the cellar and a moment later reappeared with a roll of butter that you scarcely could tell from the one he had taken down.

The woman thanked him and departed. A few days later she was in the store again.

"How did you like the butter I gave you the other day?" the storekeeper asked.

"It was just lovely," said the woman, "just lovely. I couldn't have told it from my own."

"Neither could I," said the storekeeper. "You know that what the mind doesn't know the heart doesn't grieve about. That butter *was* your own."

The farmers, or usually their wives, used to drive into town with their butter and eggs, which were known as "produce". They would stop in front of some store, dry goods or grocery, as indeed they sometimes do nowadays, and have the crock of butter or basket of eggs carried in, to be weighed or counted. Then, having agreed to the weight or count and the price, they would proceed to "take it out in trade". Then the trading, both as to price and method, was so different from what it is now that one scarcely can refrain from reviewing it.

A dozen eggs, as we have remarked, would buy a yard of shirting. It was shirting of cotton material, mostly blue on a white ground, in either plaids or stripes, and the usual price was a York shilling a yard. The price for the shirting now is fifty cents a yard, and the eggs fetch more than that a dozen, so that the advantage is still with the farmer.

The trading was not done in those days with the same facility as it is to-day. Half a cent a yard was worth haggling over. And haggle they did, the customer framing a variety of reasons why she should not buy at the price, and going so far as to say, as I heard one woman say, that the shirting did not look like her Henry. The merchant, of course, had his

arguments well seasoned, the chief ones being that the goods were the best that could be produced for the money and that while any shirting was bound to fade sooner or later, the kind under consideration would hold its colour almost as long as the shirt would last.

A pound and a half of butter would buy a yard of cottonade at twenty-five cents a yard. The same goods now sell at seventy-five cents a yard, and the butter at sixty. So that we see again the advantage with the farmer. Printed cotton used to be a great thing for summer dresses. A dozen eggs would buy a yard that was guaranteed not to fade. Now the same dozen would buy two yards at thirty-five cents a yard. Again the farmer gets the draw.

That fine old historic stuff gingham used to sell at twelve and a half cents a yard, and naturally one dozen eggs would buy one yard. Now it sells at forty cents, and a dozen eggs buys almost two yards.

Every little while someone would want a bundle or two of cotton warp. It was used mostly in coarse weaving and as a binding for rag carpets and mats and sold at a dollar a bundle. Now it is worth at least four dollars a bundle. Here, then, we have an item that has advanced to the disadvantage of the farmer, but as practically none of it is used nowadays the result is as nothing.

We should remember that I am writing in the month of March, of the year 1923, in the "winter of our discontent", and that the farmer does not get as much for his butter and eggs in the summer months as he does now.

What a splendid place "cashmere" took in the economy of those days! Do we remember the stuff that used to sell at sixty cents a yard and that was of exquisite quality at a

dollar? A black cashmere dress always was in proper place, even at a picnic, and it was very handy in case of death in the family. It is almost off the market now, and if a woman to-day buys the kind that used to cost her a dollar a yard she pays four dollars for it. But she doesn't buy any, so where's the difference? Cashmere stockings that used to cost forty cents a pair now cost $1.25, and one almost has to wear them these winter months.

But we are harking back to the good old days when flannel was in the heyday of its respectability. A silk stocking or a silk "undie" was mentioned only in connection with royalty, and one silk dress was supposed to last a life time. But what a change! For now everybody wears silk wherever it can be worn, and the lady, especially the young one, who appears formally in anything but silk unmentionables is regarded as far from being smart and indeed almost as *outré* as if she were to appear in evening dress wearing a wrist watch.

But flannel! Who would be so careless as to wear it for any practical purpose nowadays? Still it has had its day of glory. Who can remember the lovely soft cream-coloured flannel that used to cost only from forty to sixty cents a yard? It was smooth enough for the baby and costs to-day from a dollar to a dollar and a half a yard. And all-wool gray flannel that might shrink a little you could get for forty cents a yard or in exchange for two and a half pounds of butter. It was good for all members of the family, not quite so good, however as the red kind, which had a soothing influence on sore throat, rheumatism and lumbago. It was good also for chest and lung troubles, and if worn next to the skin had acknowledged curative properties.

But silk, at last, has come into its own. Silk nighties, silk petticoats, silk camisoles, silk combinations and silk shirts are as common as linen or cotton and flannel used to be. Proportionately silk does not cost as much, and who is so unhuman as not to like the soft feel of it, its swish and its beautiful sheen?

It used to take eight dozen eggs to buy a yard of good silk. To-day four dozen will do the trick. Do you wonder, then, that the farmer's wife turns to silk stockings if she can get a pair for two dozen eggs when thirty years ago the same pair would have cost a whole summer's laying? You were among the best customers and in easy circumstances, if not in affluence, if you paid as high as $1.25 for a corset or a pair of kid gloves. Whether rich or poor, your ticking cost twenty-five cents where to-day it costs seventy-five. Your towelling cost twelve and a half cents where to-day it costs forty-five. Your sewing cotton cost four cents where to-day it costs ten. Your man's "ganzy" cost $1.25 where to-day it costs $3.25. Your floor oilcloth cost fifty cents where to-day it costs $1.50. Your ribbons cost twenty-five cents where to-day they cost seventy-five. Your table linen cost one dollar where to-day it costs four. Tobacco was ten cents a plug, with a clay pipe thrown in.

In most of these things, as you can see, the comparative increase is in favour of the butter and eggs. But if I were a farmer I should be just as annoyed as all farmers must be who read this article. For nothing has been said about the chief products of the farm, about grains and fruits and vegetables and roots and live stock. But I have the defense that these important things were not in those days, nor are they to-day, articles of direct barter. They were given in exchange for the common legal tender, and therefore do not enter

our present consideration. Anyone can see, nevertheless, that if all farm products have advanced in the same proportion as eggs and butter, the farmer should not fare very badly, even now. After all, everything falls back on the ultimate consumer. He is the one who takes the brunt in all instances of high prices, present company, of course, excepted.

CHAPTER II

The Source

SMALL fish, so small indeed that the word fry scarcely would cover them, used to frequent in springtime a rivulet that came mysteriously out of the hillside, where it supplied cold water for the village, and then trickled on down to join the greater stream in the meadow. As youngsters not yet fit for school, we used to catch these little creatures and disport them in bottles taken secretly from a supply my father kept for dispensing various concoctions known as bitters and tonics. The elation that accompanied each capture was as great, I feel sure, as the satisfaction that comes to all anglers whenever they succeed in outwitting some elusive trout or in dropping the fly on the very spot where a moment ago the tail of a lusty salmon has flashed above the water.

Water, no matter where found, is for man an attractive element, and for little boys a rivulet has all the fascination of a brimming river. The rivulet that I recall to my memory was scarcely big enough to babble, nor had it any chance to meander. For it went straight down by the roadside, shining, nevertheless, on sunny days and watering withal the cress that grew in abundance throughout its course. And although it was insignificant and could lay no claim to fame, it served its purpose in quickening, as flowing water always has quickened, man's genius for adventure. It led on from its own humble estate into the greater realm of the greater stream and presented to the imagination of childhood, even at the confluence, some of the visions of men who have become renowned as discoverers, who have added to the sum of human knowledge.

The confluence was at a point just above the bridge, above the poplars, whose roots at the bend were revealed in the water and whose leaves fell and were carried away on the bosom of the stream.

We did not always wait for the leaves to fall, for we would stand on the railing and pluck them, just for the sensation of seeing them flicker down upon the shining surface, take the swirl at the bend and then float on, like valiant argosies, under the alders and through the rushes into the unknown. And we wondered, as mankind always must have wondered, whether we too might not float away as they floated, whether we might not construct some craft and thereon ride forth triumphantly into the great world beyond.

But the great world beyond was only a part of the mystery, for while the stream had many of the best qualities that nature gives to its kind, babbling here and meandering there, in those fine days before the vandal man dug it out and made it straight, it also, back the other way, far back where the woodland guarded its secrets, had in all certainty a beginning, a place where it started—a source.

It was then, and always has been, one of my ambitions to follow that stream to the source. I have started to do so many times, but it is a journey that presents a succession of distractions and supper-time always has come too soon or night has taken me by surprise.

In those far-off days the stream meandered naturally either way from the bridge, and under soft green banks it provided hiding-places for the sucker and the chub. It was not a deep stream. A little boy could wade it anywhere, and if he knew a trick or two he could catch with his bare hands, in those very hiding-places, the unsuspicious minnow or the overconfident trout. The trout, in fact, for some reason unknown

to me, was a rare creature in those waters, and to catch one was therefore an achievement as well as a delight. But we shall concern ourselves now with a tiny fish whose name I do not know, for it was this humbler denizen that oftentimes distracted us from our original purpose, delayed us so cunningly that we never have reached the source.

The source as a matter of course, and as we always suspected, could be found in the gravelbeds beyond the back acres of my grandfather's farm, where, in that forbidden region, the black bear might be encountered, where the wily lynx found his favourite haunts. It could be found there, of a certainty, for one might traverse the next concession and the adjacent side-road and not find any stream crossing either of these highways.

But for the present we are wading in the real stream as it meanders through the field just above the bridge. The water, cold no doubt when it gushed forth at the source, has been tempered by the sun so that it caresses one's bare feet but does not chill. It is as clear as crystal, except in our wake, and the pebbles on the bottom look smooth and clean, just like all well-placed pebbles should look. With the pebbles there are stones, some a fairish size, and here and there one big enough to hide a ten-inch sucker. Amongst the small stones and pebbles can be seen tiny fish with most beautiful green and red markings, and, try as we may, we cannot catch one. Many a half hour have I passed in the hope of adding one of these elusive little creatures to my score of conquests, but they are extremely wary, and they move with the suddenness and darting swiftness of the humming-bird.

Although I never have known the name of these beautiful little finsters, being held more by their beauty than their identity, I know of but few larger fish that equal them in

sheer splendour of colouring. Of all things in nature the opal comes nearest.

The opal was my grandfather's favourite stone. A splendid specimen, one that was three times removed from being inconspicuous, he wore in his necktie, and perhaps for that reason he took a keen delight in watching with me the deft movements and iridescent coating of these handsome little fish. Several times he made a determined effort to catch one, and once during haying-time he devoted a whole afternoon to this fascinating adventure.

But you must see this grandfather as I saw him. He was in size medium to small, but there was in his bearing a confidence so fine and a joviality so rare that one accepted him as being larger than he actually was. His voice was full, deep and resonant, and he could use it to excellent purpose. For him farming was monotonous, so that he grasped eagerly at other interests and diversions. He was part owner of a grocery store, took stock in the grist mill, and, if I might whisper it, owned some shares in a brewery. Therefore he was a man of some importance as well as of mettle, and whenever he arrived in the village, either afoot or behind a dashing span of roadsters, his presence generally was soon felt. For one thing, his voice carried easily from the tavern at the foot of the hill to the graveyard at the top. And even if he chose to be silent, which, of course, never was his choice, the blue tops of his top boots were enough to betray him. These things marked him, even if one could have overlooked his great gold watch-chain, which dangled a fancy gold key for winding the watch, and the great opal pin in his cravat. A hale and hearty, ruddy, jolly, free-spoken old sport was this grandad, and he was not above trying his luck at the elusive game of catching tiny, iridescent creatures on the bottom of the creek.

We used to call it the "crick". Tennyson calls it "The Brook". As such he has immortalized it. Or has "The Brook" immortalized him? The poem itself, perhaps for some of us, would be more attractive if it were less radiant, more impressive if less blithe. But notwithstanding any carping of the critics, it contains a number of penetrating lines. One for instance:

"To join the brimming river".

A simple verse, one quite properly might remark, and yet it suggests much. Perhaps Tennyson did not intend to observe a condition in nature that is, if not peculiar to England, at least characteristic of the British Isles. For there the rivers and streams are brimful—replete—and they "go on forever". With us in Canada that condition, unhappily, does not prevail, except perhaps on the wilds and in the hinterlands. Our streams, overflowing in springtime, become woefully shrunken by midsummer and thousands of them entirely disappear. Our great, majestic rivers—the Yukon, the Mackenzie, the Fraser, the Bow, the Saskatchewan, the Red, the Nipigon, the Niagara, the St. Lawrence, and the Saguenay — pass through deep gorges, chasms, channels and ravines, with high upright, overhanging, precipitous and even mountainous embankments. Notable exceptions appear in the St. Mary, the St. Clair, the Ottawa, parts of the St. Lawrence, the St. John, and the Miramichi. Still we have scarcely any brimming river such as Tennyson saw, whether he saw the Thames, the Stour, the Avon or the Ouse, the Liffey, the Afton or the Nith.

Another passage that sets us thinking is:

"For men may come, and men may go,
But I go on forever".

Here we have the almost inconceivable facts of time and space and man's mutability visualized in a stretch of running water, transfixed in a simple couplet.

These things were not coursing through my mind that sunny afternoon when my grandfather attempted to catch the wily sprite. Nor do I believe that the old gentleman himself was thinking of them. His language, free and expressive at all times, was now more picturesque than poetic, stronger indeed than many grandfathers use within hearing of the third generation.

For the small creatures that with me he was trying to capture evaded us as if they were but shadows. We could hear the hum of the mower in the field hard by, but that was the only sound. And once, when my grandfather stood upright, to ease his back, we could see the village, placid upon the hill, with the tavern at the foot, the cider mill on the right, and the grist mill on the left.

"A man might as well try to catch the devil himself," said the old gentleman, as he wiped his brow and rolled his shirt sleeves higher. "But I'll get one yet, even if I stay here till Doomsday." And, so saying, he again applied himself to the task.

The stream babbled at our feet. Tennyson, or even Thomson, would say that it bickered. In any case it did not gurgle. The gurgle is soft, soothing and rare. The first time I ever heard it was in the west highlands of Scotland. I was walking up the glen from the village of Kilmartin one night, not late, but long after everybody else was abed and all glims doused, when I heard a sound that was musical, dulcet and soothing. I leaned over the stone fence that confined the roadway on the glen side and looking down and across I saw the stream shining silvery in the moonlight. I looked and listened, with a feeling that it was fairyland; and, to complete the enchantment, as I turned and looked over the other fence, up the hillside into a

dark copse, rabbits came out and bobbed hither and thither, dim ghosts in the shadows of the trees. Nothing made sound but the brook. Nothing moved but the rabbits. An old stone tower in ruins, like an ancient keep, rose up against the sky, and behind it lay the sleeping village.

It seemed a long way back to that little stream which only babbled or, as Wordsworth might say, only rippled. And it set me thinking. There was I, an alien, but with Scottish blood in my veins, listening to a Scottish burn gurgling in the moonlight, with dour Scottish souls asleep under the thatches and rabbits scampering on the hillside. I thought of that little stream in Ontario and pictured my grandfather in his blue-topped boots squandering with me a sunny afternoon. I thought also of the source, a futile thing, after all, and still I wondered just what it would look like at the very spot where the water gushed forth from the earth. I knew no more, actually, about the source of that stream than I knew about the source of the burn in Scotland. For, indeed, and we might as well come to that now, we never can know actually the source. As far as we can tell, there is not anywhere any source—no beginning, no end. We can imagine a source, just as in those faraway days, as little boys, we imagined a fearsome place favoured by the black bear and the crying lynx. That is all.

CHAPTER III

The Agnostic

IN the natural course of events, Charlie, the incorrigible agnostic, heard of Robert G. Ingersoll, and it cheered him abundantly to think that he and the celebrated apostle of doubt thought alike on the eternal question of man's destiny and the enigma of a supreme being. Now and then, more by chance than discernment, he obtained scraps of Ingersoll's speeches, and from these he misquoted with admirable serenity statements that he believed would confound his critics and ultimately reach the ear of the minister. For while the minister regarded with sardonic contempt this flagrant agnosticism, Charlie had a secret hope that some day the minister would deign to attack him on the fundamentals, and in the extremity of his imagination he saw himself and the minister, over a drop of rye, chuckling to themselves and agreeing that theology and philosophy, terms that he used indiscriminately, were all bosh and nonsense. And nonsensical as it may seem, Charlie would repeat with every opportunity the common objections to the relations of Adam and Eve, Jonah and the whale, and Jesus and the five loaves and two small fishes, thinking in his delightful simplicity that all these objections originated in himself.

But to increase the speculation, Charlie's own origin was obscure. He came from away back somewhere beyond the Boundary, and apparently was of that doubtful Scottish stock that should have come from anywhere but Scotland. Certainly

he was not trained in religion, as most Scotsmen are, but nevertheless he had the Scotsman's natural fondness for the intricacies of theological controversy. He would discuss by the hour any conjecture one might make as to the hereafter, and he would refute with keen relish anything one might say in support of a tangible heaven or hell.

Hell, he affirmed, lost all its terror for him after he had been a week married. That, we hasten to amplify, was one of his frequent strokes of humour. Yet on no proper estimate could he be classed as a humorist. Nevertheless he had queer, even quaint, little conceits, and took a kind of withered, yet withal cynical, interest in the foibles and fancies of the community. The prospect of the cow calving was of more importance to him, indeed a matter of more appropriate concern, than the Methodist tea-meeting or the lecture on reincarnation in the Anglican church.

The Anglican church, we must no longer refrain from observing, was a weakling in our midst. In body it was a diminutive structure of pine, painted white, and it stood, somewhat sepulchral in appearance, on the opposite side of the road from Charlie's house and a little higher up the hill. In spirit it was, if anything, a little low. And the congregation, such as it was, could not count enough members or arouse enough enthusiasm to support an exclusive ministry. So that the clergyman, who usually appeared once every Sunday, morning or evening, in order not to clash with the Methodists, came from a distance, driving a big gray horse hitched to a dust-gray phaeton and wearing a loose gray duster. On the small seat against the dashboard lay a black bag containing proper habiliments. It is easy, therefore, to imagine the clergyman slipping out from the duster and into the surplice, in the little vestry directly under the belfry.

The belfry, it is worth noting, was among churches thereabouts the one mark of distinction. And, what was of more consequence, it had a bell. And the bell was rung for a minute or two a quarter of an hour before every service and again for a minute or two immediately before the stroke of the hour. It was not a highly sonorous bell and yet Charlie, sitting under the poplars, on the fence in front of his log house, across the way, could hear and feel every vibration, notwithstanding the fact that he held the custom in disdain and almost thanked the Lord for casting a blight upon his hearing.

Now it so happened that the clergyman, driving up the hill, as usual, during the first ringing of the bell, and seeing Charlie sitting on the fence, as he had seen him every Sunday, drew rein and shouted:

"My good man," he said, "do you not hear that holy bell calling you to the house of the Lord?"

"What's that ye say, meenister? I'm just a wee bit deef."

"I say, do you not hear that holy bell calling you to the house of the Lord?"

"Ye'll hae to speak a bit louder, meenister: I canna hear you against yon dang bell."

Charlie had not thought of offending. He rather would have relished the challenge, for he possessed the argumentative disposition that counts more on repetition than reflection. But whenever he did take the trouble to reflect it was on what he read in the newspaper, which he borrowed from the doctor immediately on its arrival with the mail-carrier every Friday, on the price of wheat, even a kernel of which he did not possess, on the outlook for trapping and hunting, and on his few earthly possessions. These possessions were composed of a wife and six youngsters, a house with a butt and ben and two rooms upstairs, a cow and, in season, a calf, two pigs, some

poultry, several mink traps, a bear trap, a muzzle-loading shotgun, and an inclination to move along the line of least resistance. This last possession, which I sometimes think was really an attribute, caused him to eschew manual labour, to receive with indifference the account of his indebtedness to the storekeeper, whom he described as a good writer but a hell of a "figrurer", and to sit for hours cooling himself in the shadow of the poplars. Once in a while a little boy would cross the road and sit there with him. Then it was that he would tell about the black bear he trapped back near the Boundary, a bear that snapped his axe handle in two as easily as he could snap a maple twig. He would tell how to skin a mink and how to skin a raccoon. A mink you would skin from tail to head, tubular form, and stretch the pelt on a shingle. A raccoon you would rip up the belly and nail the hide upon the kitchen door.

And then one soft warm day he remarked the bees flitting and humming amongst the hollyhocks. It was an occasion for a discourse on bees and their ways and an explanation of the expression "bee-line". But the explanation expanded within a day or two into a demonstration, and it is to the demonstration that we shall proceed.

You must imagine Charlie, the amiable agnostic, the genial skeptic, with his gun on one shoulder and an empty sardine can in a pocket of his smock, taking the little boy by the hand and starting off on a bee hunt. Although it might not seem so to us, to the little boy it proved to be an extraordinary adventure. For they went down by the beaver meadow, through the tamarac swamp and out again into a field against Christopher Drake's bush. In the field lay several heaps of stones gathered from the soil, and upon the first of these Charlie stamped with his foot and then knelt down to listen. Presently he motioned to the boy to do likewise; and as they listened they heard an angry buzzing down among the stones,

for a nest of wild bees was there, bees that greatly resented being disturbed. But Charlie was determined.

"We must get our decoy," he said, as he began to remove the stones.

Scarcely had he started, before up from the stones appeared a plump yellow and black bumble-bee. It he flicked aside with the brim of his hat, and all the other bees, as they appeared, he treated summarily in the same manner, until soon there was not a bee left.

When they had dug down as far as the nest they found that it was composed of dry grass, and from the centre of it Charlie took out a small quantity of honey in the comb and a dark brown lump which he said was bees' bread.

Near the middle of the field stood a big black stump, and upon it Charlie put the sardine can and into the can he put the honey.

"This," he said, "is our decoy."

Then he sat down on a log near by and began to bite the soft ends of blades of grass, which he pulled with his hands, breaking them off deftly close to the roots.

It was one of those fair summer days when crows caw lazily and mowing machines send out from green meadows a rhythmic sound. All the sky was blue, pale blue, like flax flowering in a field, and there was not a cloud to fleck it. From beneath the log fat black crickets ventured forth, and bob-o-links who, the boy thought, would have liked to gulp them, warbled their dulcet notes, fluttering, like vibrating spots of melody, hung 'twixt earth and sky. On the woodside a squirrel chirped, and his brush, tawny beside the scarlet of the tanager, flicked and quivered from tree to rail and from rail to tree. And a weasel, sly, slim creature of the burrow,

appeared for a moment and then slid from sight, a dark streak, like a shadow moving.

"If a bee don't come soon," said Charlie, "we'll be skunked."

And as he spoke they heard a long, droning whine, and presently a small brown object, a *tame* bee, settled upon the honey.

"As soon as he gets his fill," Charlie whispered, "he'll make a bee-line for the hive. Keep your eye peelt and see how far you can follow him."

And presently the bee rose from the honey and flew in a straight line, as far as eye could follow, towards the bush. Charlie picked up the honey and ran after it. The boy followed. They crossed the field and stood leaning on the fence at the edge of the bush. Charlie shaded his eyes with his hands and peered searchingly in through the beeches.

"If we didn't follow it straight," he remarked, "we're ditched."

Then he broke a piece of bark off the top rail, making a place for the honey.

"Let man go as straight as the bee," he said, as if to himself, "and then prate about his God. We followed in our clumsy way, and unless we have luck, pure luck, we're betched."

He explained that the bee would tell about the honey and that soon other bees would come out to get more. If he had been lucky enough to keep to the line, they soon would find the honey and again would make the bee-line back to the hive.

"And they talk about releegion," he chuckled. "How can a man settle on a belief and stick to formulas like musk to a trap when he can't even understand the devices of yon wee bit bee?"

And again, as he spoke, that long droning whine fell upon their ears, and immediately several small brown objects alighted on the honey.

"Wheesht!"

One by one they took their fill and flew into the bush, dark spots against the darker background, during the moment in which they shrank in size and then receded beyond human sight. Charlie watched them through narrowing eyelids and with twitching lips.

"We're not skunked yet," he said, picking up the honey, mounting the fence with one leap, and plunging after them.

From no angle could Charlie present a noble figure. Seen from behind by the small boy who followed, he appeared to be mostly legs, long scrawny legs that were mostly boots. For he wore top boots turned over at heel, with one pant leg inside and the other outside, showing one broken lug and the other stretched into a loop. The trousers were of faded gray cotton-ade held up by a single suspender fastened by a nail, and they were assisted as a covering by a shirt of striped cotton. Above all there was a felt hat that had been black and that now had nothing to show of band or braid or former design.

Charlie, therefore, did not present a noble figure.

And yet to the boy he was more than merely picturesque, for he inspired a romantic interest in himself as well as in his adventure. This was especially the case as he sprang from log to log or crossed with one bound spots that looked like mire or fen. And after he had followed the line as best he could a distance into the bush he stopped, looked carefully all round, and then once more deposited the honey on a stump. Satisfied as to the location, he found a seat on the end of a log near by, and the boy sat down beside him.

It was not long before they heard again that long, droning whine, and presently a bee, coming apparently by a direct route, settled down upon the edge of the tin and began to devour the honey

"Now, then," observed Charlie, "we're getting near the den, for they can't take a bee-line very far in the bush without running up against something. Any hollow tree or any tree with a hole in its trunk is a likely spot. Just keep your eye peelt. And in the meantime remember one of the wisest things written in the Bible is that God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

The observation led the boy to ask, perhaps a bit timorously, whether Charlie believed in God.

"Why do you ask?" Charlie countered.

The boy, feeling himself cornered, shuffled in his seat before answering. Then he spoke up.

"Because," he said, "they say you say there is no God."

"They're a lot o' blitherin' idiots," said Charlie. "I don't believe in *their* God. I believe in the god of the bee-line. We can see evidences of a god all round us out here, but they'll find pesky few in all their churches and chapels. I recognize a superior being, but I'm not above lifting a mink from a trap on the Sabbath."

"Or robbing a bees' nest on Monday?"

Although this question was in the boy's mind, he did not utter it, preferring to see man as here represented pursue his predatory instincts and await the result.

More bees had come, and by this time some of them were leaving. All went in the same direction. Charlie got up and followed them. Presently he stopped, and looking up toward the top of an old dead tree he pointed to a spot, a hole perhaps

an inch in diameter, about which small dark objects moved ceaselessly and in apparent confusion.

"That's it," said Charlie with a look of triumph; "we'll have honey for breakfast to-morrow."

"Won't we rob the nest to-day?" asked the boy, with a tone of disappointment.

"They'd eat us alive," said Charlie. "To-night we'll lift the honey. You see, at night a bee is as helpless as a baby."

The boy concluded that the delay was in reason, and he was on hand that night when the cross-cut saw swished into the decayed trunk of the tree, as Charlie and one of his sons, standing opposite each other, drew the glimmering sheet of steel back and forth between them.

There was just enough light to work by, and it was in all its aspects an uncanny performance. For an owl hooted in a nearby tree, and Mrs. Charlie stood hard by, with a tin boiler uncovered, ready to receive the honey. And after the tree had fallen with a crash that must have shaken the dust of all who lay yonder upon the hill, she received until the boiler was almost half full of what was to the taste as if it were the rarest, sweetest, wildest *tame* honey ever produced.

"No," said Charlie, as he took hold of one handle of the boiler and his wife the other, "they didn't skunk us".

Then they all trudged along for a while in silence, the son and small boy following with the saw, and the owl keeping close to them, flitting from tree to tree. They were to return by the old road, and in order to do so, it was necessary to cross the creek, stepping from log to log just as we used to do when on the way to the berry patch. Twice Charlie slipped into water that went over his boot-tops, but the good woman clung like a leech to the slippery logs.

Presently they came out into the open, where the boiler with its precious freight was set on the ground while its bearers rested.

And it was in truth a restful scene. The old road, all grown over with grass, curved between the two clumps of bush like a natural corridor, and across Wilson's field could be discerned the several lights of the neighbouring village. A buggy rattled on the new road, and they could hear the doctor hurrying to some sickbed, saying, "Come, come, now! Get along, get along!" A weird cloud of mist hung over Hammond's lime kiln, and Charlie, with his head bared, stood looking at it.

"So they say I say there's no God," he said.

The moonlight fell full upon his face, a benign, even if gnarled old face, as we stood looking silently at him regarding the mist.

"I know nothing," he said gravely, "and I own up to it, except that God, *my* God, moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

CHAPTER IV

The Organ

BEFORE the advent of the piano the "organ" as an instrument of music was esteemed for its cheapness, its durability and the fine religious flavour of its tone. In some places, even outside churches, it has survived, and on a Sunday afternoon, especially in a quiet village, its soft intonations still may be heard intermingled with the softer twittering of swallows or the blatant winding of an automobile horn.

There were no automobiles in the heyday of the organ. The horse was still revered for his ancient virtues, and to move from one place to another at the great speed of ten miles an hour was a fine thing to brag about—a high tribute to the condition of the roads and the mettle of one's steed.

Next to the fiddle, the organ, in all our country places, was the musical instrument of most importance, and although it played second fiddle to the fiddle at all gay celebrations it gave way to no instrument as an evidence of luxury and refinement, as an ornamental piece of furniture, or for the proper spiritual rendition of Moody and Sankey hymns and the long metre paraphrases intoned by the followers of John Knox. Its case was of walnut, a wood which abounded in Western Ontario, and which after long years of waiting is at last cherished for its quality as well as its scarcity. Sometimes the case was plain, sometimes set off with gewgaws and appendages decorated in black and gold, and surmounted with imitation pipes. The glass vases that reposed in upper niches shone with quicksilver brilliance and displayed semblances of flowers in primary colours painted by hand.

In all things ethical the organ was the very antithesis of the fiddle. If you were a Methodist, the fiddle was the instrument of the devil, while the organ was admitted into the church and cherished in the home. If you played the fiddle you might not enter the Golden Gates. I remember well the earnest efforts of the schoolmaster to obtain salvation. Revival meetings were being held and many persons, among them several who played the organ, were received at the penitent's bench. The schoolmaster, moved perhaps by the appeals of the evangelist, or at least suffused with the spiritual effulgance of the moment, confessed that he was seeking salvation and asked that the brethren pray for him. But his experience was not the common experience. He felt no transporting sensations. No load of sin was lifted from his back. The cause was clear—clear to everybody but himself. He could appreciate the merit of salvation but it was hard for him to believe that he could not obtain it so long as he clung to the violin. Perhaps he had the soul of the artist; at least, he risked his own soul rather than hang his beloved instrument on the peg forever. And by so doing he at once put himself in the same class as the two Dunlops, who fiddled at dances, and Yorkshire John, who scraped away of a summer evening, when the door could stand open for the benefit of the neighbours. For it was a certainty that the fiddle gave lodgment to the devil, and one woman, visiting a nearby town, and looking into a window that gave a display of violins, said to her little boy, who stood awed, beside her:

"There, Johnny, are a lot of devils."

"And what is that one?" asked Johnny, pointing to a 'cello.

"That's the daddy devil."

Then for a brief space Johnny regarded in silence a big bass viol.

"And what's that great big whopper?" he at length asked.

"That," said the woman with much asperity, "is the grandaddy of them all."

With the organ went as a matter of course the old-fashioned music master, who was the organizer of the singing circle and newsmonger of the neighbourhood. He had long thin legs, used hair oil, waxed his moustache and affected some of the eccentricities of the dandy. For he carried a golden-headed walking-stick, wore prunella shoes, and in fashion was fit company for the hoop skirt or the bustle. He could play "The Battle of Waterloo" without the score, dance the schottische, the polka and the Oxford minuet and sing with a tremolo which he declared was an attribute of all great tenors.

But it was the organ, not the organist, that first attracted our attention. You could hear its low, slow droning any Sunday afternoon, just at the hour when everybody was rousing from the customary snooze. It would start with only the dulcet and piano stops open, playing restful airs such as "There's a Land that is fairer than Day", "In the Sweet By and By" and "Rock of Ages". Then, with more assurance, the celeste and vox humana stops would be opened, and over the orchard and through the poplars you could hear "One Sweetly Solemn Thought" and "Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing". Convinced by now that everybody would be up and about, the organ, strengthened first by the treble coupler, and then by the bass coupler, would pour forth the stirring notes of "Shall we Gather at the River?" or the martial measures of "Onward, Christian Soldiers".

The first person to appear would be Joe, the teamster. He always smoked the very best five-cent cigar and put a dime on the plate every Sunday. A clever fellow was Joe. Although he made no profession of religion, he was rated as high as some that did. In these days of prohibition I may be permitted, as

a matter of history, to record that he drank to excess on fair day and holidays and used strong language whenever his load from the quarry stuck in the mud. He was noted for strength of body as well, but was so slow in action that whenever he got into a fight he was knocked out almost before he was aware the thing had started. In liquor meant for him in fighting mood too, and he always had it in mind to whip the wagon-maker—if he could only get him into his clutches.

The wagon-maker usually appeared about the time the organ began to play "Oh, for a Thousand Tongues". He would sit on the verandah of his shop's false front, with a clay pipe unlit in his mouth, wondering what in blazes things were coming to anyway. He hadn't much use for religion, and it didn't even move him, except in contempt, to see Deacon Smith going to church and carrying on a tray under a napkin the communion bread and wine. He sometimes wondered about the possibility of the devil lodging in the fiddle, and he used to tell the blacksmith, whose shop was on the other side of the road, that as to sacred music and fast music, he didn't believe in leaving to Old Nick all the best tunes.

The blacksmith was inclined to sympathize with that view, because his son played the fiddle and his daughter vamped on the organ. Indeed, his daughter was regarded as the best vamper in those parts, and she could sing, as Joe used to express it, like a starling, if sufficiently urged, "The Walkerton Murder" or, preferably, "The Yellow Rose of Texas". But the blacksmith after all had an open mind, induced no doubt by his practice of parting his hair all the way down at the back. He had been something of a gay dog, he was known to confess in confidence, in the old days back 'ome, but he sat in communion just as a matter o' course. He knew, as everybody

knew, that the footnote forbade cards and dancing, but he knew also that young folk must have their fling. Dancing was a pastime that people took to like a hot tire to the rim, and the fiddle made the best dance music, especially with good organ accompaniment—good vamping.

Many an argument he had with Deacon Smith. The deacon ran the grist mill. The mill grinding was *his* music. And to his mind, the church was the proper place for the organ, fire for the fiddle. But there were other evils beside fiddling and dancing. He knew well enough that the wagon-maker used to steal his cordwood, but he never could catch him in the act. It was done, he knew on black nights, in a thunder storm, or during other periods when honest people are indoors.

Honesty used to be one of the chief virtues. Every community had its honest John, and everybody was supposed to be honest, even if everybody locked his doors at night and contrived to turn his back to you whenever he opened his wallet. And one might suppose that the organ was permitted in the churches, except in some of the Presbyterian churches, because it produced honest music blown honestly through reeds, which is one of nature's ways of making pleasing sounds. The reed, indeed, is the poet's ideal instrument of music, and we know that the greatest of all our poets has used it to denote genuineness and to expose dishonesty. For Hamlet, when he is parleying with Guildenstern, who has confessed his inability to play upon the pipe, remarks,

> "Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet you cannot make it speak".

I well remember that some young upstarts, the offscourings of a perverse generation, raised the cry that an organ should

be placed in the Presbyterian church. In that sacred edifice no profane music had ever been tolerated, and therefore the proposed innovation was regarded as a device of the devil. The fathers, those dour creatures who revelled in the sober things of life, who had been used to the tuning fork and the human voice, foresaw a calamitous upheaval, the supplanting of the paraphrase by the evangelistic song, the suppression of the long metre Doxology and the expression of "Pull for the Shore". It was a crisis. The minister, held back by the strong ties of tradition and urged forward by the spirit of the time, was like the key log in a jam. At heart he was with the fogies, but he had seen enough of the world to make him sympathetic with the upstarts. Donald Macpherson, one of the last of the hand-loom weavers in this country, stood out strong for the fork, and it was he who denounced the organ as "an abominable kist o' whustles". He himself had been precentor ever since the congregation had first met in Sandy McLaughlin's log house, and it was hard therefore for him to pull away from simple things, from unaffected worship. Let the Methodists praise with the organ if so they wished: the Lord knew the contrite heart. Let them attract the young to their services: the righteous should not perish.

It so happened on one occasion that an overcrowded meeting of the Farmers' Institute, at which there was to be light entertainment, including music, caused some misguided person to suggest that they move in a body to the church and carry the organ with them. And they moved. But Donald Macpherson moved also. He entered the church just as the entertainment was about to begin. He walked up into the pulpit, thumping his walking-stick heavily on the floor with every step, and forgetting to remove his bonnet, an offence which only the extreme gravity of the occasion could condone. He ordered them

all, together with their ungodly paraphernalia, out from the synagogue into the market-place. And they went.

Donald was a good weaver, a good citizen, but a poor politician: he could not divine the spirit of the time. But when at length an organ was placed in the church and the tuning fork put upon the shelf, long after Donald's loom had fallen a victim of the factory and the mill, Donald himself, chastened perhaps by the frost of years, and at least resigned to the inevitable, would sit in his corner in the new brick edifice, a seraphic look upon his face, listening to his own granddaughter playing, first, music suited to the psalms and, then, one "o' they new-fangled tunes". He even liked the practice of chanting softly as the congregation took their places in the pews, with only the dulcet and celeste stops free, and then again, as they went out, with both treble and bass couplers on and the gloriana stop wide open.

CHAPTER V

The Temperance Lodge

THE Scott Act never reached our village, and local option, that spasmodic forerunner of the Ontario Temperance Act, had not yet come into fashion. Nevertheless we were fortified against the direst ravages of strong drink by a lodge of the Independent Order of Good Templars. We did not go the length, as some communities did, of building a temperance hall, for we were able to procure for a modest rental the township building, proper enough place, and large enough, especially as there was not in those days a preponderance of opinion in support of total abstinence.

Total abstinence, as a matter of fact, was the shoal on which the frail craft of temperance always stuck, for many men who were not out-and-out tipplers were, even so, not averse to a social glass on any occasion or a pull at the bottle on bitterly cold days. Cold itself was always a good reason for drinking whiskey, and in summer beer was tolerated by many an erstwhile squeamish soul. Therefore it was not without trepidation that the organizer of the lodge came into our midst. But he found immediate sympathy and support in most of the Methodists, while others, perhaps of more suspicious faith, said that they guessed it was the right thing to do, but they would rather wait and see how it turned out.

Out-and-out tipplers, those genial specimens of the genus homo who took delight in leaning against the bar, with full glasses in front and empty pockets beneath, laughed the

project to scorn. They were of the kind that loaf around, waiting to be treated, and who have the serene type of mind that imagines they can take it or leave it alone. To leave it alone, however, was not their purpose, for to refuse a drink was the same as to lose five cents. And five cents in those days was the difference between being a pauper and being independent.

The Order of Good Templars was, above all other things, independent. It provided its own regalia, had its own form of initiation, and even went the length of contriving an anteroom and inventing a password. The password, in fact, was the bulwark of protection against invasion by the philistines. Every member, quite rightly, swore to keep it secret, and much conjecture ensued as to its actual worth and composition. The question arose as to whether the guard could properly refuse admittance to anyone who could pronounce it. If he could not refuse, then it was the bounden duty of every member to protect the secrecy of the password as he would protect his own life. Maria Smith declared that if Charlie Mitchell, for instance, who boasted that he knew the password, were to whisper it, like the real members, at the door, they could not refuse to admit him, and that if he were admitted they could not refuse to provide him with proper regalia.

That was a serious situation. For, what good was a temperance lodge if any drunken loafer could enter at will, demand regalia and observe every sacred ceremony? The Chief Templar, who in the common walk of life was the blacksmith, advised us to wait until the iron was at least in the fire. He did not think it possible for any outsider, especially Charlie Mitchell, to know the password, but he urged the members not to pronounce it aloud when they presented themselves for admittance, but to whisper it. He admonished them also against

repeating the word aloud to themselves, while at work or in periods of meditation, because no one knew what enemy might be within hearing at that very moment.

Henry Perkins was the guard. He accepted the position with becoming gravity, and afterwards made the profound declaration that no one would get by him without giving the password.

The password, in all seriousness, was the cause of much conjecture during the next fortnight, because someone rashly had said that it was the name of an article of food in daily use. The folly of giving even a clue was discussed generally, and here and there one or two names, and one in particular, stood the brunt of considerable criticism. Guesses as to the actual word were made on all hands. "Meat" was the favourite and "Bread" was a close second. Most of the old women guessed "Tea" and two or three were sure it was "Butter". Whatever it might be it caused much conjecture and even aroused some debate.

A debate, indeed, and in keeping with a good old practice, became the form of the forthcoming evening's entertainment. It was the second Lodge Night, and perhaps there are others beside myself who remember the subject of the debate. For it was resolved that the works of man are greater than the works of nature. The Chief Templar, who was known to have other accomplishments than shoeing horses and setting tires, was asked to move the resolution. Mrs. Simpkins told us afterwards that he tried to wiggle out of it, but when they told him that the schoolteacher would speak for the negative, he pulled the string of his leather apron tighter and began to survey the heavens. The schoolteacher, with her head still "fu' o' edication", took the precaution to say that the af-

firmative had the better opportunity but she fell at once upon the task of preparing evidence in rebuttal, and with some dark motive requested that I be one of her supporters. The judges were to be the Methodist parson, the miller, and old Mr. Johnston.

It was a notable fortnight in our history. Quite apart from the debate and the announcement that Lizzie Lavery would sing a solo, much information went about relative to the effects of alcohol on the alimentary tract. If taken in sufficient quantities whiskey would make the lining of the stomach like a piece of tanned leather. If taken even moderately it would dull the senses, loosen the purse strings and cause untold misery. Look at the shoemaker. What had whiskey done for him? His children were in rags, his work was behind and his wife had left him for a whole month. And yet there were others who seemed to thrive on it. To be sure, Joe, the teamster, never was very much in pocket, but he enjoyed life, always was jolly, except when in a fight, and it was a safe bet that there was nothing wrong with his alimentary tract. The moderate element thought, with Paul, that a little sling at bedtime was permissible. But we Good Templars were the total abstainers. We included about a third of the women within driving distance, a man or two here and there, the blacksmith, the postmaster, and Ted Smale's hired man. We walked past the tavern with our heads in the air, and it rather galled us on Lodge night to see the place a little more lively than usual, just as if they were setting up wholesome competition. But we knew our cause was right, and we were determined to overcome evil with good.

Henry was on guard at the lodge door. One by one his friends and neighbours, being challenged, advanced, whispered the password and were permitted to enter. Mrs. Simpkins

looked unusually severe. It was of course a solemn performance; and, having entered, she proceeded to bedeck herself with proper regalia. Betty Butson was so excited over the impending debate that she absolutely forgot all about the regalia, having done her hair in a Psyche knot, and would not have remembered the regalia at all had not Mrs. Perkins stood up and brought the fact to the attention of the Chief Templar. Betty was greatly upset. She blushed crimson as she walked across the hall to where the regalia lay in a heap on a bench. Never before, she confessed afterwards, had she felt so completely flabbergasted, but Mrs. Jones assured her that as far as the other members were concerned, they wouldn't hold it against her.

And at length, with Betty in proper regalia, the Chief Templar opened the meeting in the form printed in the book. But just at this juncture there was a slight disturbance at the door, caused by Charlie Mitchell, evidently, as Jimmie Jackson expressed it, "three sheets in the wind", demanding admittance.

"Advance and give the password," we heard Henry exclaim.

"Cheese!" shouted Charlie.

Henry opened the door and bade him enter. He stood for a moment looking stupidly at the meeting, then came forward and took a seat. There was an ominous silence, and then someone observed that Charlie was not in proper regalia.

"How can he wear proper regalia," remarked the chief, "when he has not been duly initiated?"

"He must have been initiated," argued Henry, trying to justify himself, "or he couldn't tell the password. I claim he has the right to enter and wear proper regalia."

"How did you find out the password?" asked the Chief, addressing Charlie.

Charlie blubbered as he looked up with bleary eyes.

"I smelt it," he said thickly.

"Yes," said the Chief, rising and coming down towards the intruder, "I knew someone would smell it sooner or later. But if it smells half as strong to you as you do to us, you'll be glad to get out. In any case, the door is still there and you're going through it right now."

Everyone knew Charlie's reputation as a fighter, and of course we expected a struggle. But everyone knew also, and Charlie knew, that the blacksmith was the strongest man in the township. Charlie, therefore, offered no resistance when a powerful hand reached down and grasped him by the shoulder. Instead, he rose, wabbling at the knees, and, responding to the obvious intention of the hand, moved somewhat uncertainly towards the door. We saw the door opened and Charlie thrust inelegantly through it. There was a clutter of steps on the porch, and then the Chief Templar entered, alone, and resumed his place as head of the Order. He began to read from the book, just as if he were reading from Proverbs:

> Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine? Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.

"In view of the evening's entertainment," said Tom Jones, interrupting, "part of which is to be a debate, I move an adjournment of the regular meeting, especially as there are no candidates for initiation."

Mrs. Simmons bobbed up and down, like a flash, and then, like an echo, the faint sound of her voice reached us:

"I second the motion."

Maria Smith rose immediately, in full regalia, and said that as it was a temperance lodge and not a debating society, temperance should come first.

Ted Smale's hired man, standing up at the back and pulling at the tinsel on his regalia, said he believed that them as be temperance should remain temperance and them as bain't shouldn't.

The minister said that as nobody had moved an amendment it would be in order for the chair to put the motion.

Mrs. Simmons bobbed up and down again, like another flash, and then we heard, just like another echo, the sound of her voice piping faintly,

"I withdraw."

"Then I second the motion," said Maria Smith, very inconsistently, as everyone agreed, but Maria, as she sat down again, only drew her lips a little tighter and folded her hands on her lap.

"All in favour," shouted the Chief, as he saw several members rising.

A dozen hands went up, a huge majority, and the gavel came down.

"I now call on Miss Lizzie Lavery," said the Chief, "for a solo entitled, 'The Cows are in the Corn'."

Lizzie sang, unaccompanied, as only Lizzie could sing, and after prolonged applause she obliged by singing a song entitled "The Walkerton Murder", after which the Chief Templar announced the subject of the debate—resolved that the work of man is greater than the work of nature—named the judges and proceeded to make his introduction. He took North America for instance. When our forefathers crossed the briny deep, he asked us to admit, this continent was a howling wilderness. It was as nature had left it. But see

what a change man had wrought! The work of man was greater than nature's because man had improved on nature, and so on and so forth.

Fred Freeman, who had been pathmaster for two seasons and was thinking of running for council, led the negative. He, too, took North America for instance, and he admitted that when our forefathers crossed the briny deep this continent was a howling wilderness. But that is about all he did admit. He held that if nature had not provided for man, man would have had nothing to work on. And so on and so on.

Betty Butson came next with an attempt to reclaim for the affirmative any ground that might have been lost in North America. Obviously, she was much flustered, owing no doubt to her consciousness of the fact that Psyche knots were as yet not properly appreciated thereabouts. But she started right out with an attack on North America, and became so vehement in her declarations and shook her head so vigorously that the Psyche knot began to untwist. One strand stood straight up behind, giving Betty a most defiant air, and as she traversed North America her hair gradually fell apart. The audience began to laugh, and as Betty did not know the cause she became very much excited and actually went all the way from Nova Scotia to British Columbia in one desperate leap.

My turn was coming next, and in my exuberance I whispered to Susie Taylor, who sat beside me and on whom I looked with much tenderness, that if I couldn't get off North America I'd get off the platform. And, as it happened, Betty, just at that very moment did get off, her hair having tumbled down in absolute disorder, and I got on.

I turned and faced the audience. Perhaps, hardened and unsympathetic reader, you too, in the course of your che-

quered career, have spoken in public. Perhaps you know what it is to have the mind become blank, even for ever so brief a space of time, to see the heads of the audience bobbing confusedly in front; in fine to lose control of your nerves and your tongue and to be glad to blurt out anything, just so long as it is something. I blurted out the very thing that had caused my derision.

"All right," I said, "take North America for instance. I admit that when our forefathers crossed the briny deep this continent was a howling wilderness."

Then I floundered. I caught at this and I caught at that, until at length I caught my breath and launched upon a geographical discourse. I traced the St. Lawrence to the foot of the Great Lakes, went up the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi, began to wander helplessly through Louisiana, wallowed hopelessly in Florida and ended somewhere, somehow, in the quagmires of the South.

Henry Perkins followed. He believed every claim his leader had made as to the situation in North America. One thing he was sure of was that if he hadn't given his squashes, for instance, a good deal of personal attention, if he had left them entirely in the hands of the Almighty, they wouldn't have taken first prize at the Fair.

The schoolteacher absolutely ignored North America. To hear her speak, you wouldn't know there ever had been such a place. She clung to flowers and birds and beautiful scenery, and ended with what everyone agreed was an eloquent appeal for reverence of the Giver of all Good.

The judges took down the points with great pains and impartiality. And after much deliberation they announced that the debate was a tie, each side having scored two points.

The spokesman said that if in going over the waterways I had thought to mention the artificial canals I would have made a point and won the debate. But it all went to show that, besides being temperate, we had some first-class latent talent. All that was needed was development. My own opinion always has been that the debate rang the death-knell of the lodge. If it was not the debate, then it was the unhappy situation that forced an isolated few to pay lodge dues for the doubtful distinction of being total abstainers. We heard much about teetotalism, moderate indulgence, freedom of conscience, taking it and leaving it alone, tippling and treating, but nothing could save the lodge from early desuetude and final collapse. It was after all a situation described by Ted Smale's hired man in words which we requote:

"Them as be temperance should remain temperance, and them as bain't shouldn't."

CHAPTER VI

The Graveyard

WHAT could be more appropriate, or even more enjoyable, on a summer Sunday afternoon than a sociable meditation in the graveyard. I write "sociable" because, except in graveyards, one always meditates alone. But in graveyards, especially when they are homely and old-fashioned, there is the uncanny sensation of other spirits being present.

But why uncanny?

With us it should not have been so. For we knew all who lay there beneath the mounds—Bill Patrick, with his wooden leg; Joe Butson, with his one eye; Lucy Lawson, with her false teeth; Norah Norris, with her black alpaca; Charlie Smale, with his hare lip; and others, two score or more, who had been with us in this life, who had laughed with us and wept with us, whose suns and moons had been ours, upon whom the same rains had fallen, who had disputed with us the very location of the very fragment of earth whence, some day, as we are prone to believe, their bones, reanimated, will issue and cleave the firmament.

But why uncanny?

Joe Ham used to say that he felt just as much at home in the graveyard as in the gravel-pit. The blacksmith used to boast that he was no more afraid to walk amongst the marble slabs, even at dead of night, than to put a shoe on Lord Haddow. But deep down in our own hearts, where we hide our

confessions, we nourished something different. For every graveyard, no matter where found, has its own disquieting tradition, its own store of unearthly sounds and ghostly spectres.

And if we knew all who lay there, we knew also all that they had been, for there were not any secrets on this side of the grave. We knew the shapes of their headstones, the dimensions of their monuments, the variety of flowers that bloomed above them. Some had sweet William and others mignonette. Some had old man and others creeping Charlie. Some had daisies and myrtle, with here and there the honeysuckle and the weeping willow. And all, without slight or discrimination, had that irony of the graveyard, live-forever.

And if we knew them all and their surroundings, we knew also the epitaphs beneath the brief records of their lives.

"Lord, she was thine,"

the wagonmaker ordered to be engraved on his wife's headstone, because, no doubt, he realized that she never had been his. But the engraver miscalculated the space, with the result that he hadn't enough room for the last letter—"e". So that when the slab was fixed in its place, we read:

"Lord she was thin."

And when, weeks after he had paid the bill, the wagonmaker saw what a difference one letter can make, he smiled pathetically, even retrospectively, and remarked that while the meaning of the inscription was literally true, it had not been his intention to record the fact as an item of history.

But why uncanny?

It is simply because we cannot get it into our heads that

when a man dies he is dead. In broad daylight we had no misgivings, and it was then that we visited the graveyard. About four o'clock of a Sunday afternoon, a time when many of the villagers were dozing serenely on horschair sofas, old Charlie, Joe Ham, and the farrier used to walk leisurely up the hill, pipes in hand, enter the graveyard, which was only a quarter of a mile away, and sit down upon the grass and live-forever, in the shade of the catalpa tree, beside Bob Oliver's grave.

Bob used to be crony with these three, and they were quite guileless enough to feel that, though silent, he was there with them in spirit, thinking as they thought, dreaming as they dreamed, seeing as they saw. And yet they felt that now he knew infinitely more than they. But they were the executors of his estate, and they had observed all the conditions of the will. Thus it was with some sense of satisfaction that they sat, Sunday after Sunday, looking at the gravestone and reading this inscription:

> "Within this grave do lie,
> Back to back, my wife and I.
> When the last trump the air shall fill,
> If she gets up, I'll lie still."

Joe Ham always used to read the lines aloud, and then he would add, as if it were a fresh thought coming to him for the first time,

"He needn't worry: he's so dashed deef he won't hear the trump anyway."

Then they would recollect all the amusing epitaphs they ever had heard or read, and once in a while someone else would join the group and tell something new. But, new or old, old Charlie never failed to repeat an epitaph which, he said, he had read on a stone down somewhere near Boston:

"Here lies the body of Susan Lowder,
Who burst while drinking a sedlitz powder;
Called from this world to her heavenly rest,
She should have waited till it effervesced."

That never failed to remind Joe of one he had seen on the tombstone of a namesake of his at Hollis, New Hampshire:

"Here lies old Caleb Ham,
By trade a bum.
When he died the devil cried,
'Come, Caleb, Come'."

There was another that Joe sometimes quoted, but he couldn't recall where he had seen it:

"ALPHA WHITE
Weight 309 lbs.
Open wide, ye Golden Gates,
That lead to the heavenly shore;
Our father suffered in passing through,
And mother weighs much more."

Weight, without thought of passage through the Golden Gates, was a matter of some concern in those days. When Tom Fagen died, for instance, they couldn't buy a coffin large enough to hold his body. So that one had to be made for it—not so very long, but very wide and very deep. For Tom had a tremendous girth. Like another Tom of similar bulk, he used to drink a panful of sour milk without taking his lips from the brim. And when the day of his funeral came, and the hearse arrived from Mitchell, it was all they could do to get the coffin inside. Then when they did get it placed and were well on the way to the graveyard, it slipped to one side and overbalanced the whole conveyance into the ditch.

The farrier used to tell about it, for he had attended the funeral, and he never failed to remark that no doubt the jolt

prepared Tom for the harder jolt he would receive when he came face to face with St. Peter.

Tom had a family of eleven. The farrier always referred to that fact, saying also that seven and eleven were lucky numbers and adding that Tom's children should have these lines, as he had seen them somewhere, engraved on their father's tombstone:

"Our papa dear has gone to heaven
To make arrangements for eleven."

Or, as the farrier said, they might have copied an epitaph to be found in Plymouth, Massachusetts:

"Here under this sod and under these trees
Is buried the body of Solomon Pease.
And here in this hole lies only his pod:
His soul is shelled out and gone up to God."

The farrier, puffing at his pipe and always imagining he could see a siren's form on the side of the hill, would quote epitaphs by the score, and of many he could mention the original location. For instance, this one from Stone, Vermont:

"Grim death took little Jerry,
The son of Joseph and Serena Howells,
Seven days he wrestled with dysentery,
And then he perished in his little bowels."

And this equally unsavoury one from Melrose, Massachusetts:

"When I am dead and in my grave
And all my bones are rotten,
If this you see, remember me,
Nor let me be forgotten."

More original is this one, which the farrier said he had seen in a little cemetery somewhere in New York State:

"Underneath this pile of stones
Lies all that's left of Sally Jones.
Her name was Lord, it was not Jones,
But Jones was used to rhyme with stones."

"Lord," however, did not daunt another rhymester who wrote an epitaph for Susan Ford. Susan died before her name became famous. Nor had she any opportunity properly to appreciate good back springs. Nevertheless Joe Ham could recall her epitaph, and we requote it here, not so much for its beauty of thought as to show that where one rhymester failed another succeeded:

"Here lies the body of Susan Ford,
We hope her soul is with the Lord;
But if for hell she's changed this life,
Better be there than J. Ford's wife."

Overhearing the word Susan, the new parson, passing the group sitting on the grass, said that it reminded him of the well-known epitaph written by Thomas Moore at the urgent request of Susan Blake:

"Good Susan Blake in royal state
Arrived at last at heaven's gate."

One would not suppose that it required any great mental effort to produce that couplet; but some years afterward, when the poet had a disagreement with the aged lady, he changed the couplet into a quatrain by adding these lines:

"But Peter met her with a club
And knocked her back to Beelzebub."

Joe, not being a real connoisseur of epitaphs, had not much to offer that we could accept as being authentic. Of that the farrier constantly complained. And to show his contempt for the spurious, he would quote this epitaph which

he declared he had seen also in that cemetery at Hollis, New Hampshire:

"Here lies Cynthia, Steven's wife:
She lived six years in calm and strife;
Death came at last and set her free,
I was glad and so was she."

And if you would cross over into Vermont you would find at Burlington these touching lines:

"Here lies the wife of brother Thomas,
Whom tyrant death has torn from us,
Her husband never shed a tear
Until his wife was buried here.
And then he made a fearful rout,
For fear she might find her way out!"

We had unfortunately, apart from the one over the wagon-maker's wife's grave, no arresting epitaphs. Our fondness was for the simple and unaffected, and as most of our tombstones were ready-made, or at least semi-ready, requiring only the names and the dates to complete them, we did not find it necessary to strive for anything startling or original. "Gone to her reward", "Not dead, but gone before", "Heaven is our home", "At Peace" were about as far as we dared go. We counted more on the number of vehicles in the funeral procession and on the abundance of floral tributes. To be able to say that by the time the hearse reached the graveyard the last buggy had not turned the corner a mile and a quarter away was proof of the high regard in which the deceased was held throughout the whole community. But these things did not mean so much to the farrier. For the farrier dearly relished a comical epitaph, and he would go miles out of his way to read one. He loved also, as, I fear, we all loved, to sit there in our own graveyard, with broad flat leaves spreading cool above us and soft green grass beneath. We loved to

look over the graves and down the hillside into the meadow, where the old elm towered above the tamaracs and crows gathered from some carrion feast. We could look down on the creek as it found its way amongst the willows, and perhaps there was just a suspicion that on Sunday the suckers were at their best. We could see the sawmill, like a great lump of burnt umber, lying silent behind its barrier of logs. Then there were the farmsteads beyond with their orchards and barns and fattening cattle. On the left hand, again across the meadow, we could see Drake's bush, with great gray boles of beeches standing out against a purple gloom.

Gloomy, mayhap, but still for us it all went into the making of our sum and substance. We could look at the scene as it appeared to us then, knowing that it showed the handiwork of pioneers; and we were in sympathy with it, just as we were in sympathy with the graveyard, for in a kind of vague way we knew that it was of us and we were of it; and we knew also, but in no vague or uncertain way, that some day—for some of us soon, for others late—we would be laid in that sunlit spot, called back to mother earth.

CHAPTER VII

The Two Albums

THE photograph album lay on the walnut eentre table in the parlour, beside the wax fruit, the stuffed owl and the family Bible. It was large, handsomely bound in full Levant, hand tooled, and was fastened with a elasp that shone like gold. It was revered not only beeause it eontained the physiognomieal reeord of the family and its immediate aneestry, but also beeause whenever visitors eame it was an unfailing souree of interest and entertainment. After the weather had been diseussed, the stereoseopie views exhausted and prognostieations exehanged as to whether it would be a hard or soft winter, the album was opened with full appreeiation of its importance, and the visitor had the privilege of seeing what father looked like before he married mother.

Father's photograph was the first in the album. It was only a tintype, but mother always told everybody that she liked it best of all beeause it was like father was when she first knew him. He wore a full beard then, for that was the style, and really he looked older than he looked twenty years later. And what elothes! We used to laugh at them, and I should have been just as well pleased if we hadn't shown that photograph at all, it was so ludierously out of fashion. You see, at that time it hadn't beeome old enough to be antique, and the velvet eoat, trimmed with wide braid, to us aetually seemed to be eomieal. And the trousers! They were more like sausages

than anything else, and they were made of cloth different from the coat—a kind of dove-coloured moleskin that gave, they said, a heavy odour in damp weather. The boots ran up inside the legs of the trousers and were of fine leather, well tallowed, you could see, and making, really, quite an elegant appearance.

But, of course, appearances do not count always. If they did we never should have had the courage to show all the photographs. For we had other photographs of father and all his folks and of mother when she was a little girl in pantalettes and all her folks. There was, for instance, a perfectly hideous photograph of mother's mother-in-law. If it wasn't hideous mother made us think it was. She was sitting knitting, and had a frown on just as if she had dropped a stitch. Her hair was parted in the centre and brought down tight over the ears, where it was knotted with velvet ribbon. She wore a comical little checked cape, and her spectacles were pushed up on to her forehead so that she could see things at a distance. And to top everything, the pupils of her eyes, which no doubt had been dim in the original, had been touched with black ink, so that they fairly jumped out in front of everything else. That gave her a wild, glaring look, which we understood was in harmony with her disposition.

We had more photographs of mother's folks than of father's. One we used to point to with pride was of a cousin of mother's who once played on the piccolo before the Queen at Windsor Castle. And the Queen was so deeply stirred that she presented him with a purse of gold and expressed the hope that he never would have to play for a living. He was the only son of mother's oldest brother, Harry. Of this brother, who of course was our uncle, we had two photographs, one taken

just before he was married and the other a year later. You wouldn't have known they were of the same person. Everybody used to remark the difference. Aunt Flora, who always looked through the album every time she came to see us, just to make sure that her own photograph was still there, used to say that as a young man uncle Harry really was very striking. For he had black curly hair, which he kept well oiled, and parted in the middle, back and front. He travelled for a nursery, and in the natural course of events saw much of the country. Mother always was thankful we had the two photographs of him, even if one of them was only a tintype, because, poor man, he never would sit for another.

Then there were the photographs of grandfather and grandmother on mother's side and of grandmother on father's side. Our other grandfather never could be coaxed to have his photograph taken. Mother used to tell us that she remembered him just as if it were yesterday, and then she would whisper that he was a very vain man. He had two hundred acres of land, and his monument when it was erected was the tallest in the graveyard. When the hearse that bore his last mortal remains reached the church door the last rig had not yet left the driveway back on the farm. It was a wonderful tribute. But father never said very much about it, although mother, whenever she showed the album to anybody, always mentioned it, because, as she said, nobody would ever know what grandfather had to put up with while he was alive. A photograph of his widow, taken in her weeds, was our constant reminder of him.

This grandmother had a marvellous memory. She could repeat the text of every sermon that had been preached in the Methodist church ever since it was, as she said, inaugurated. And she hadn't missed a funeral in those parts during

twenty years. Nevertheless time began to tell on her, and naturally enough her memory weakened. But she never forgot the number of rigs that turned out to pay a last tribute of respect to her husband, and it would have helped her greatly to slip away happily in the end if she could have had any assurance that her own funeral would be even half as large. But before she died she gave all her near relatives a copy of her photograph, the one taken in her weeds, and to father she gave also, with tears in her eyes, and because, as she said, she felt it was father's due—she gave, appropriately framed in black plush, the nameplate from grandfather's coffin. We all were greatly moved. And what moved us even more was her last request, that we take the nameplate from her own coffin, have it framed to match her husband's, and then keep the two always hanging side by side on the west wall of our sitting-room, just opposite the photograph of all the flowers that decorated uncle Harry's coffin. *Ars longa, vita brevis!*

Brief in reality is the span of life as one sees it while turning over the leaves of the album. Many whose representations, especially near the front, reveal youth and beauty and virility, long ago returned to their original clay, and faces that were familiar and dear to us are held now only in memory. But towards the back there were likenesses of a younger generation, many of whom still are with us. There were, for instance, photographs of all us youngsters, taken when babies, some of us in mother's arms, and others all by ourselves. There were George and Harry and Frank, and Mary and Margaret and Isabel. And then there was my own, taken when I was but three, when, standing on the chair and doing my mightiest, I couldn't see the canary bird that the man said would pop out if I just kept on looking into the glass without

moving. How angry I beeame when the bird didn't appear! How I tossed up the hair that mother, taking great pains, had parted and eombed and brushed! These photographs we passed over quiekly, beeause we knew that most of our visitors were not greatly interested in them. And, anyway, we were eager to have the visitors read from another album, the album of autographs, whieh always reposed on the whatnot in the eorner, over a tidy croeheted of Berlin wool.

The autograph album, in its heyday, beeame with us almost a malady. Everybody had one, and everybody was eomposing something suitable, even if, perhaps, not original. It was mueh too eold and formal to write merely one's name, and therefore it beeame the ambition of the upeoming generation to think out something that would be arresting, appropriate and to one's eredit. And eonsequently it was with obvious impatienee that we waited until the visitor had seen all the photographs of father's folks and mother's folks, had heard about unele Harry and grandfather and grandmother on father's side, and had seen the nameplates hanging on the wall. We always stood right at mother's elbow with the autograph album ready in our hands and a bottle of frostproof ink, with pen, on the eentre table. Then when at length the moment did arrive, when the first album was elosed and fastened with the elasp that shone like gold, we pressed forward with the most important item in the entertainment, and asked with, I fear, some timidity whether the visitor would deign to write in our album.

It was, quite properly, the duty as well as the privilege of the visitor, before writing, to read what already had been written. And he would read on the first page this fervent tribute:

Ah, all who know our glorious Kate
Admire her form so full and straight.
Tender her glance; from her sweet lip
Enamoured bees might honey sip!

This reveals not only ability to rhyme, but also admiration and an appreciation of what such beauty might bestow.

Then follows something in the form almost of a prayer; at least it was written by a more pious hand:

Smooth be life's pathway before thee,
And bright with the sunshine of love,
May garlands of flowers enwreath thee
Till angels shall crown thee above.

As "Above" meant, we must suppose, Heaven, it plays an important part in the wishes and sentiments recorded in the album. For the visitor would proceed to read:

As our friendship has budded on earth,
So may it blossom in Heaven.

And then again:

Canada is your native land,
Ontario is your home,
May Heaven be your resting-place,
When on earth you cease to roam.

It seems only natural that there should be some who had not written in a pious mood. For instanee:

If scribbling in an album
Friendship secures
With the greatest of pleasure
I'll scribble in yours.

There was something very personal and sometimes very intimate in these autographed sentiments, and in a few instances the meaning seemed to be obseure. For example, when the musie teaeher wrote,

As brevity is the soul of wit,
Therefore I shall be brief,

we were not sure just what he meant. Jessie Littlejohn used to remark that he meant to say that shortness is everything. Perhaps that was because she herself was short of many things—short of stature, short of breath, short of that elusive substance that makes both ends meet. And although she used to say that she would rather do a day's washing any time than write her autograph, her name could be found in every album from Dublin to the Boundary. Her favourite text, a text indeed favoured by many others, was this:

I wish you health, I wish you wealth,
I wish you friends in store,
I wish you Heaven after death.
What could I wish you more?

Oftentimes in those days a verse of this character written in an album was decorated with a device in the form of coloured flowers, idealized or classic landscape, doves of peace, cornucopias, or gates ajar stuck on with mucilage. And some of these devices bore mottoes of their own:

Of all that is near
Thou art the nearest;
Of all that is dear
Thou art the dearest.

The sea may rise,
The mountains fall,
But my love for thee
Will live through it all.

Others, again, had only simple and brief inscriptions, such as "Trust in me", "Ever thine", "Think of me" and "Untroubled be thy days". Then there were some of more pretension:

Loyal friendship, pure and true,
Such is what I feel for you.

Believe me or believe me not,
Thy smiles can never be forgot.

It was the cause of much pride whenever anyone was able to show an original composition written by the school teacher For the teacher had an enviable local reputation as a poet, a reputation gained by the simple process of never failing to record in appropriate stanzas every death that occurred in the community. But the album, I fear, was a distressing test of versatility. For there the teacher had to depart from the long, solemn cadences of the obituary and set down in quicker, brighter measure lines that, even if coy, were cheerful, felicitous and perhaps urbane. The quality, of course, was determined by the appreciation of the reader; and one might readily imagine the eagerness that attended our first glimpse of what he had written for us:

Here on this pale palimpsest
I do not write for fame,
Because I think it's for the best
That I merely sign my name.

Miss Cherry, our esteemed dressmaker, who had passed a winter in Detroit, said that it revealed the simplicity of the man; and Henry Perkins when he read it just couldn't say a word. He closed the album slowly, got up, bade us all good-bye, went out and untied his horse, and the last we heard of him or his was the sound of the buggy going over Hotham's bridge.

We had hoped that Henry himself would write in the album; but we could see that he was too keenly affected. He told Jessie Littlejohn afterwards that the ordeal was altogether beyond him, that whenever he attempted to write in an album his mind actually became a blank. Then Jessie told him in

confidence that in some albums one could find specimen verses. With that information he examined every album he could find, and when at length he found the printed sheet this is what he chose:

Remember me when far away,
And only half awake;
Remember me on your wedding-day,
And send a piece of cake.

Mention of the wedding-day makes one think of the minister. For the minister always responded to a request for his autograph, and Jessie Littlejohn used to say that she had read quite a number of his verses and that everyone was different from the others. In her album, for example, according to her own quotation, he wrote:

Trust no lovely form or passion,
Though they look like angels bright;
Trust no custom, school or fashion;
Trust in God, and do the right.

Jessie never was sure whether she liked these verses in her album as well as the ones the minister wrote in ours:

Here's the marble, here's the chisel,
Take them, work them to thy will.
Thou alone must shape thy future;
Heaven give thee strength and skill.

And then, after the visitor had read,

May your cheek retain its colour,
And your heart be light and gay,
Till some handsome fellow whispers,
"Norah, darling, name the day",

and

Choose not your friends from outward show,
For feathers float and pearls lie low;

after he, or more likely she, had written,

When you're sailing down the stream of life
In your little bark canoe,
May you have a jolly time
And room enough for two,

the album, with becoming reverence, would be replaced over the tidy upon the whatnot, just under the motto, suitably framed in walnut, with walnut shells decorating the corners—this motto, worked also with Berlin wool:

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

CHAPTER VIII

The Almanac

THE almanac always hung from a nail in the outer end of the cupboard, so that it would be handy in case of sickness or for prognostication of the weather. In importance and popular esteem it came next to the Bible, which, quite properly, reposed in serene dignity upon the parlour table beside "The Pilgrim's Progress", Fox's "Book of Martyrs" and the two albums—photograph and autograph. As an entertainment for visitors it could not compete with the stereoscopic views, but for ready reference as to commonplace things that affected all households it was in constant use. For it contained an abundance of information concerning both man and beast, as well as anecdotes and comical tales that relieved and enlivened the long winter nights. Its arrival, in late autumn, always caused every member of the family to gather round the kitchen stove, where someone, reading aloud, would make bedtime come all too soon. Then, as if to add to the attraction, it was replete with illustrations of a miscellaneous character—likenesses of persons who had been cured of divers diseases, signs of the zodiac and drawings of celebrated stock animals.

Animals, perhaps naturally enough, came into our lives then more closely than they come now. For the arrival of a new calf, the swarming of bees and the killing of pigs were events of capital importance. Everybody knew that the man blundered who killed for meat when the moon was on the wane, and yet how could any man forecast the waning or the

waxing without consulting the almanac? Then, too, it gave us a feeling of satisfaction, even of security, to be advised that the new year would begin with cold weather, heavy snowstorms and high winds. These conditions almost invariably would be followed by a January thaw and consequent exposure of the fall wheat to ruinous frost.

Fall wheat, one must recall, was a factor of grave concern throughout the whole year. The precise time for seeding never was a certainty, but its calculation was assisted greatly by reference to the almanac. Then there was the constant probability of grain being nipped by frost before being covered by the mothering coating of snow. And, having been amply covered early in December, it always was reassuring to read in the almanac that there would be a steady winter, hard and unrelenting, with plenty of snow until well into the month of March.

March, of course, ever has been a very uncertain month. But we believed, and we had witnesses to strengthen our belief, that if it should come in like a lamb it would go out like a lion. Coming in like a lamb was pleasant enough for the time being, because we relished the first breath of spring, but the change to the lion caused forebodings and many prophecies of damage to tender growths. Still, we had the almanac as a guide; and, even if the worst came to the worst, it was with no slight sensation of relief that we knew just what was going to happen. Here and there, as is always the case, could be found doubting Thomases, but most of us believed the almanac and could produce proof that, year in and year out, it generally, as the blacksmith said, hit the nail on the head. Of course, as to the sun, the moon, the stars, the tides and all such revolutions of nature, we knew that the almanac was, mathematically, correct. And we had the

gratification of knowing something of the Roman indiction, the Dominical letter, the solar cycle, the epact, and the Julian period. We could tell also to the very hour when the sun would enter Aries, when he would enter Cancer, when he would enter Libra, and when he would enter Capricornus. And, as matter perhaps of more importance to us, we could refer to the almanac as final arbiter whenever any argument arose as to the date of Ash Wednesday, Easter Sunday, All Saints' Day or the feast of Corpus Christi.

Argument was one of our chief forms of entertainment. We would argue as to the qualities and peculiarities of anything and everything. It might be the weather, the crops, the strength of Jack Lamb against the strength of Joe Ham, the chances for an early election, the qualities of "John A." over the qualities of Blake. And if we couldn't arrive at a settlement by reference to the almanac we would adjourn sine die. For we had the inherent pertinacity of the Scot who confessed that he might be convinced if he could find the man who could convince him. It was like another Scot, an old man who lay on his deathbed, with friends and relatives gathered round for the dissolution.

"Would you like us to pray for you, Sandy?" asked the minister.

"Naw."

"Would you like us to sing one of the Psalms?"

"Naw."

"Is there anything at all, at all that we could do for you?"

"Naw."

Then for a minute or two there was deep silence.

"Weel," said Sandy, breaking the tension, "if ye're in the mood for it, ye might jist argie a bit."

Still, the almanac was useful in other ways. For it told

how to beautify the complexion by mixing one's own magnolia balm and how to restore and retain hair by using a home-made tonic. It gave valuable hints for the guidance of girls just entering womanhood and advice for those who had reached the period of middle life. To the old it offered solace and inspiration, and to all, old and young, it recommended certain remedies that could be obtained almost anywhere. If your blood was thin it told how to enrich it. If your back ached or you saw specks floating before the eyes, you could obtain relief if you would not be discouraged after taking five or six bottles, if you would only persist in using the remedy. If you had rickets, or palsy, or falling sickness, or palpitation of the heart, or rheumatism, or St. Vitus's dance, you could be cured, even after all doctors had failed. And to prove it, there were likenesses of men and women and children who had been restored to health, as well as their testimonials, which were set down so that even those who ran might read.

Reading was believing in those days. Joe Ham, after quietly trying the hair tonic on his bald pate, read himself into buying a bottle of the other remedy in hopes of curing his backache. The result was miraculous. One bottle so completely cured him that he got drunk and sent a tintype of himself to the proprietors of the remedy, telling them at the same time of what had been done for him and acknowledging regret that he hadn't some other ailment so that he could make a further test of their wonderful medicine.

The news of Joe's cure inspired Henry Perkins to try the remedy on his dyspepsia. He had tried everything he had ever heard of from starvation to condition powder, with only indifferent success. But this new remedy, right from the start, and, notwithstanding the fact that Henry's complaint was

chronic, seemed to put new life into him. Mrs. Perkins said that she was ashamed, especially when company came, to see him eat. Still, it took six bottles to make him feel satisfied that he was completely cured. After that, on his own avowal, he could eat raw onions, fried ham, and mince pie without turning a hair. He could drink tea, coffee, milk, or even communion wine, and never feel it. Gas no longer troubled him. And it was a relief to everybody to see him sit in church without belching. He became so fat he had to buy a new suit of clothes, and the celluloid collar he had worn every Sunday for years had to be put carefully away against the terrible possibility of his turning thin again. That contingency, however, never happened. But something perhaps worse æsthetically did happen. For as Henry waxed his wife waned. And argue as much as he dared and refer to the almanac as much as he could, Henry found it impossible to induce his wife to try the remedy. For Mrs. Perkins contended that there comes a change in every person's life, that to interfere with the processes of nature is to go against nature. Nevertheless she remained wonderfully cheerful and sang in the choir until within two Sundays of the end. She died, poor thing, a mere fraction of her former rotundity, because, as we all knew, she would not act in accordance with the instructions given in the almanac.

These instructions, everybody remarked, seemed to have been put there especially for Mrs. Perkins's benefit. And if she did not profit by them her action was a timely warning for the whole community and an absolute proof of the restorative qualities of the remedy. From that time on everybody had faith, and it really seemed as if there would be in our village no demand for the doctor. Of course, the almanac did not claim that the remedy would reset a broken bone or extract a

tooth, and for that reason, one must suppose, the doctor stuck to it, until new ailments appeared, such as pleurisy, pneumonia, cerebral meningitis and appendicitis, ailments that seemed to require something more drastic than merely a few drops of liquid taken internally.

Liquid was the form in which, as was natural, so it seems, we liked to receive our remedies, for we had no faith in external application or the laying on of hands. We believed that there was in existence somewhere, even if the almanac had not discovered it, a real panacea, a panacea that could be bottled up and sent to the four corners of the earth.

One of these corners, I might claim with appropriate modesty, was our village. For it seemed to be on the outer edge of everything, and could get into touch with the rest of the world only by means of great agencies, of which, it is well to acknowledge, the almanac was not the least. And the almanac, quite apart from its original purpose, gave many hints of great value in everybody's daily routine. Who, for instance, if he did not read it in the almanac, could know that in sewing it rests one to change one's position frequently? Or who could imagine that a bag of hot sand will relieve neuralgia? Then, again, how delicious are young green onions eaten with bread and butter at breakfast! But, oh, the consequences! Nevertheless we ate freely of them, for the almanac informed us that a cupful of strong coffee would remove the odour. The almanac told us also that oatmeal thickens water and lightning sours cream. It told us that castor oil might be taken internally or used for greasing the buggy. It told us that mud relieves a bee sting and that cobweb will arrest bleeding. It gave good advice, such as to go to bed when sleepy, to eat when hungry, to use warm borax for removing dandruff and not to act spitefully towards one's neighbours.

Neighbours used sometimes to arouse spite by borrowing the almanac and neglecting to return it. Conduct such as that was unpardonable. For without the almanac how was one to know the significance of Gemini, Leo, Sagittarius, Aquarius, Taurus, Virgo, and Scorpio? How was one to know the dates of the festivals and anniversaries? Could one guess as to the probable appearance of the morning and the evening stars, the recurrences of the tides and the several changes of the moon? No. For these things were determined for us, set down in proper order, in the yellow-covered booklet that hung from the nail driven into the outer end of the cupboard.

CHAPTER IX

The Moustache Cup

THE moustache cup, after a long and honourable period of waning popularity, went out absolutely when Charlie Chaplin came in. It was invented by the same frame of mind that contrived the ear flap, the bridle blind and the goose poke. And now, its day of usefulness gone, it reposes on the plate rail, an object of curiosity and, perhaps, of decoration. But in the heyday of its fame it had its proper place and its real purpose: it reduced to the least common multiple the slithering and straining process that always distinguished the drinking of tea by those barbaric persons who gloried in a luxurious hirsute adornment of the upper lip. And it had another purpose, or at least it inspired a motive, perhaps an ulterior motive, by casting aside all hesitation when once a year the difficulty arose of choosing a suitable Christmas present for uncle John. Because the moustache cup, once its reputation had been established, was the fitting thing to give to all uncle Johns whether they grew moustaches or not, and all uncle Johns were supposed to expect moustache cups and to prepare for them.

Our uncle John, we soon perceived, was of all men the one for whom the moustache cup originally was designed. But he was too modest himself to claim any credit. Of course he knew, as we all knew, that nature and his own inclination had provided him with means for thoroughly testing the merits of this ingenious cup. Therefore, in choosing our Christmas gift, we offered him a delicate compliment.

Christmas giving in those days was almost the same as it is now: everyone gave out of a full heart and expected nothing —well, not much—in return. So that we really did not begrudge uncle John his moustache cup, mostly because it was pleasingly appropriate. And irrespective of that, he used to suffer us to pass our summer holidays on his farm, hoeing corn, weeding turnips, milking cows and helping with the new-mown hay. For all that we were grateful.

Gratefulness, however, is not very convincing: in most instances it doesn't go far unless well supported by something tangible. That is the way we looked at it whenever it came to an expression of our appreciation of all that uncle John had done for us. And that explains why we gave him a moustache cup two Christmases in succession. But, as a matter of fact, the first one broke under, as grandad declared, the weight of its own responsibility. It was succeeded by a more ornate cup, one that was decorated with bands of gold and enough flowers for a funeral.

Flowers came everywhere into our attempts at decoration. We had lilacs on our bonnets, clover on our Chinaware, daisies on our calicoes, pinks on our muslins, strawberry blossoms on bedroom walls and a little of everything in the coloured prints of the "Seasons". Perhaps that is why we liked them on uncle John's moustache cup. But uncle John himself had a more practical appreciation. He observed that the cup had at least one measurable virtue: it held twice as much as an ordinary cup and was a man's cup made for a real man. That opinion always pleased grandmother, because she had reared uncle John and was proud of the fact that while some men could scarcely grow a moustache heavy enough to disguise the upper lip, her John flaunted one that could be turned into a bow-knot. And as an item of family history, let it be known

that uncle John ran to hair. He had hair in his ears, hair on the point of his nose; and it was his occasional boast that he had declined the honour of posing for a photograph to be used in a "before" and "after" advertisement.

It was an honour indeed when with four moustache cups on the table we all sat down to grandmother's Christmas dinner. It should be remarked that in some of the best families moustache cups were kept on hand—for convenience as well as protection. Grandmother always kept four—one for grandad, one for dad, one for uncle John and the fourth, a small one, for uncle Clarence.

Clarence was our uncle on mother's side. That really is not a reflection on mother, because many progressive men have been unable to grow heavy moustaches. As to that, inability was more lamentable in those days than it would be to-day. So that uncle Clarence was in a quiet way the laughing-stock of our little circle. But he did his best. He rubbed on his lip bear grease, hog tallow, vaseline, kerosine, goose oil and lamp black. And, willy-nilly, all that he could produce was a light coating of down. That, however, was sufficient reason for grandmother to place beside his plate the smallest of the four moustache cups. And in placing it there, grandmother always contrived, somewhat adroitly and, I fear, perhaps not without a seasoning of malice, to place the cup halfway between uncle Clarence's plate and aunt Matilda's.

Dear aunt Matilda! Let us hope that when she passed to her reward, shriven of her sins, she was shriven also of those superfluous hairs that caused her so much chagrin and ignominy here upon earth. For if she was sensitive of anything it was of this unfortunate affliction. And yet she clung to her feeble moustache with a tenacity born of the fear that the more she tampered with it the worse it would become.

And notwithstanding the urgent solicitations of three generations she persistently refused to cut, pluck or eradicate. She was grandad's sister, a condition that induced grandmother, as mute evidence of her disapproval, to place the cup so that one might infer that it was intended to be used by aunt Matilda, not by uncle Clarence.

Dear aunt Matilda! Even at that, she wasn't a bad old soul. She couldn't help being a bit crotchety, not hearing very well, and suffering day and night, but mostly at night, from gas and insomnia. She was one of those prim old creatures who believe in letting well enough alone; and as she never had trotted, as grandad used to express it, in double harness, she had become one-sided and perhaps self-centred. She pretended not to notice the character or the proximity of the cup, but drank her tea from another vessel with the relish that is a result of many years of practice and preferment.

Perhaps some persons might think that grandmother shouldn't have trifled with aunt's sensibilities. As to that, who can judge? For aunt Matilda was grandad's sister, and there was present all the time, although a stranger might not have discerned it, that glow of family feeling that rises to-day and smoulders to-morrow. And although aunt Matilda pretended not to notice the cup, we all felt her resentment, for she never failed, at the end of each Christmas dinner, with grandmother urging us to have another slice of pumpkin pie, to knock the cup, as if by accident, upon the floor. Thereupon, and invariably, we all would rise and repair to the parlor. And it was there that on a memorable Christmas one of us youngsters asked in all candour and sincerity, "Grandma, why don't you get a moustache cup for aunt Matilda to have all her own?"

The parlor was useful only during celebrations of this kind.

And there grandmother would sit with us a few minutes, urging us to munch hickory nuts and sip a little of her elderberry wine. Then she would slip out and gather up the fragments of China. It really wouldn't grieve her in the least, because we continued to give uncle John a moustache cup for Christmas, but instead of sending it to him we sent it to grandad's, so that it would be there for him whenever he might happen to drop in for a meal or just to enjoy a social cup of tea. We kept one also for him, on our own sideboard, just to show that we appreciated the importance of his moustache and were willing to cater to it, in the same way that the storekeeper catered to us.

It really was the storekeeper who introduced the moustache cup into our community. He was preparing for the Christmas trade, and as a pure speculation he ordered one of the cups. The novelty appealed, especially as it was attractively displayed against a background of candy hearts, harps, and gates ajar. And the following Christmas he ordered six, one, as it happened, for the minister, one for the farrier, one for Henry Perkins, one for the doctor, one for anybody that might happen to come along, and one for uncle John.

Of course, it was uncle John who gave the fillip to the idea, because he was bolder than the rest, having been the first man in those parts to discard the dickie for the boiled shirt and to eschew paper collars in favour of celluloid. And notwithstanding his natural tendency to run to hair, he was something of a dandy, using Jockey Club on a silk handkerchief, wearing kid gloves and prunella shoes and adorning his bosom with one of those new-fangled four-in-hand ties. And he never considered himself properly dressed, even at Christmas time, unless he had on a white waistcoat and a mink cap with a peak in front and ear flaps that were tied on top with black silk braid. He

clung to the old custom of carrying a snuff-box, which he opened and passed to others, especially on festive occasions, with fine formality. And then, after the sniffing, there would be a rich display of handkerchiefs that looked like miniature Paisley shawls.

Perhaps it was all this that caused uncle Clarence, observing uncle John's fame, to attempt a moustache himself. In all fairness it should be acknowledged that he did not come from a line of hairy ancestors. And without hairy ancestors one cannot grow hair. That seems to be a law of nature. At any rating, uncle Clarence, in our estimation, couldn't hold a candle to uncle John. But we should not forget that uncle John, everybody's uncle John, was the man for whom the moustache cup was invented.

CHAPTER X

Croquet

WE were a law-abiding, neighbourly, eonsiderate, even forbearing eommunity. We had our simple games, our innocent amusements, our tests at skill, our pleasant pastimes. In winter, those of us who were not debarred by the footnote, had eards and daneing, and everybody, aceording to sex or inelination, had skating or shinny, football or forfeits, and indeed all the kissing games that we eould invent, whieh always were a souree of great satisfaetion to both old and young. In summer we had duek-on-the-rock, shoulder-stone, boat-swings, horseshoe, and evening rambles through the graveyard.

And then, one warm afternoon in June, Miss Cherry, our esteemed dressmaker, introdueed the elegant and pieturesque and withal bedeviling game of eroquet. I refer to it as being bedeviling, beeause from that time onward, until the fever reached its height and then slowly abated, our erstwhile peaeeful village, our seene of homely industry and eontentment, beeame, if not a bear garden, at least a place of wrangling and diseord and strife and bitter rivalry. Miss Cherry herself, a woman of years and diseernment, and I am free to reeord, of discretion, beeame perhaps not a termagant but at least a stiekler and a erank. A crank, I write, and yet perhaps I should ease the term with balm of Gilead. For Miss Cherry, with all her meagre waist-line and extraordinary bustle, was fair and honest and above board. The ground she chose for setting out her stakes and hoops was in a sense

neutral. It lay back from her dress-making shop, which was the corner room of what had been the old frame tavern, between the end of the lane and Tufford's barn. It was not common ground, and yet we used it as such, playing there afternoons and evenings with a gusto and fidelity that at length prompted old Mr. Brown to drive over to Seaforth and buy for himself all the implements of the game. None of us will forget that day. For when Miss Cherry saw the old man driving his stakes and setting out his hoops she regarded it as being not so much of an affront as of a challenge. She retired forthwith and consulted her minions. And that very afternoon she took up the gauntlet and stipulated the conditions. She and Henry Perkins would play against Mr. Brown and any other player he might choose within a radius of five miles. That seemed to be fair. Nevertheless the old man was nonplussed. For he was, if anything, gallant. And therefore he felt impelled to choose a member of the fair sex. Nothing, acording to the farrier, could be fairer. But whom could he choose? The game was new to us. Someone suggested Nellie Newcombe, who taught music between times and had made one or two excellent shots by striking, according to criticism, at random. Others thought of the doctor's hired girl, an English maid, who said that she had seen them playing the game on the lawns back 'ome. But the old man, taking the burden of responsibility upon his own shoulders, chose Phoebe Parsons, a young woman who had come down from up Bethel way to live at the parsonage.

Phoebe cut something of a figure in our midst. She wore in the form of a sash, with long ends flowing behind, and rosettes here and there and everywhere, almost a whole bolt of blue ribbon. Jessie Littlejohn described her as a bolt from the blue. But blue in fact appeared to be the prospect for

Miss Cherry and Henry Perkins when we began to whisper about that Miss Parsons was a crack croquet player, that she had played ever since she was a girl in short dresses and that she had told someone that on one occasion she had gone through clean from stake to stake and back again without a miss.

All this was bad report for Miss Cherry and Henry. And what was worse still, notwithstanding the social slight she had made of never playing on our common green, Phoebe went across to Mr. Brown's and played with him the very evening of his arrival home with the new set. But that was not the worst. For she practised on Mr. Brown's lawn all the next forenoon, scoring points from one end to the other and altogether flabbergasting Miss Cherry.

We can only surmise who it was that sent the alarm to Henry. Be that as you will, it became known that Henry turned his horses in the middle of a furrow and headed for the village. There he left the team at the blacksmith's to be shod all round, and a moment later he was rapping on Miss Cherry's door. Miss Cherry came out, and after a few words of conversation, she handed to her assistant the flounce she was making for Mrs. Smale's cashmere dress, and then she and Henry walked up leisurely to the Tufford green. There these two practised assiduously for at least two hours. Meantime a few of us who were interested in the event moved thither. We sat on the fence watching the proceedings. And presently, without drum or cymbal or any forerunner, Miss Parsons and the old man appeared in the offing, each carrying a mallet. And Miss Cherry and Henry, seeing their opponents approaching, forthwith, and quite properly, stood aside, at strict attention, leaning on their own mallets, to await the arrival.

The old man very gallantly opened the gate, and Phoebe swished through on to the green. There the two parties bowed in greeting, but not a word was uttered until Mr. Brown formally announced that he had invited Miss Parsons to play as his partner and that she had accepted.

"Of course," said Miss Cherry, perhaps with a slight touch of sarcasm, "we presume that Miss Parsons understands that *we* are only amateurs."

With that Phoebe blushed so that her blue ribbons looked quite pale.

The old man replied.

"Miss Parsons tells me," he said, "that she is only a beginner." Then he added, with an audible chuckle, "And I beat her myself this morning."

"Oh, anybody could beat me," said Phoebe. "I play like a man, and she laughed self-consciously, as she pressed the grass with the head of her mallet. The mallet had blue stripes, matching the ribbon, and against the green of the grass the blue looked very blue. When Pheobe said that she played like a man Miss Cherry sniffed audibly.

"A bit easy on that 'anybody' stuff," said Henry, with a guffaw. "We'll soon know."

There followed some discussion as to rules, and then Miss Cherry and Mr. Brown drove at the farther stake, to decide which should play first. The old man drove the nearer. With that Miss Cherry stepped forward to begin the game. From our place on the fence we could observe very agreeably her fastidious poise and characteristic manner of attack. Her mallet had mauve-coloured stripes, which matched the sprig of lilac on her breast. The handle she gripped firmly with both hands, the right hand just below the left, and stooping for-

ward, a posture which caused her bustle to tilt slightly upward, she drew the mallet backward, at a right angle, made a motion or two, and then struck the ball so that it went through the first two arches and lay three feet farther upon the green. She had now two shots at the first side arch. The first shot sent the ball in front of the arch but off the court. It was an astute play, because when the ball was fetched into court again it lay at an angle sharp enough to enable Miss Cherry to drive her ball through the arch, as she expressed it, on the bias, and make it roll forward almost into position for the cage.

The cage, we all knew, was as Scylla to most players. But to Miss Cherry it was the Rubicon. For, once through it, her course was clear. Clear also was her conscience. For while she always stood out for the fine points of the game, and unswervingly did her level best to win, never, even in the immediate hazard of losing, was she tempted, as some of us oftentimes were, to kick slyly into a more convenient position her own ball or, which was not so offensive, her partner's.

Position, as anyone might see, was in croquet everything. Without it you were like a bee in a bottle. With it you passed onward to the final stake, which was Shekinah. And by position I do not mean attitude. If I did mean attitude, which includes posture and attack, then Miss Cherry would wear the palm. Because Miss Cherry was a model of deportment. Never was she known to stand astride a ball and make what is known as the pendulum stroke, for in order to do so she would have to draw the mallet backward against a taut skirt That action she regarded as being unladylike, ungraceful, even grotesque. If a gentleman essayed it, she witnessed the effort with admirable tolerance, but if ever he put one foot forward to serve as a guide for the mallet she made an open

protest and stigmatized that method as being unfair, unsportsmanlike and absurd.

Absurd, of course, was the whole game as we played it. For, as it unfortunately happened, with Miss Cherry's set came one book of rules and with Mr. Brown's another. For instance, Miss Cherry's book said that after you had once roqueted one ball and played off it, you might not roquet it again until you had scored another point. In other words you were dead on that ball unless you went through a hoop. Mr. Brown's book, on the other argument, set it down that once you roqueted a ball and played off it, you were dead on that particular ball, only for that play, whether you scored or not. Henry Perkins, who was a rule unto himself, always contended that to hold that a player ever was dead on any ball was ridiculous.

And ridiculous as it may seem to be, we never quite reconciled these conflicting rules. We made compromises and court rules of our own, but nobody ever seemed to be wholly consistent as to when certain rules should be observed. For instance, when Miss Cherry's ball was fetched into court, it was placed on the line a mallet's length from the outside of the arch. As to that Mr. Brown did not raise any objection until after Miss Cherry had passed successfully through the arch and taken position in front of the cage; because, as we must surmise, he did not think that she could get through. He argued that the ball should have been placed on the spot where it crossed the line and not straight in from the spot where it happened to lie outside the court.

But Miss Cherry countered with the very proper argument that his objection should have been taken before she continued the play. The old man was visibly displeased, and when Miss Cherry on the next stroke struck one wire of the

cage and glanced through, he threw his mallet upon the ground and declared most vehemently that nobody, no matter how expert he might be, could play against rules of that character.

But Miss Cherry coolly took position in front of the second side arch, and Phoebe, looking very coy and, I am bound to say, very winsome, laid her ball, with the blue stripes, in front of the first arch. Then she stood behind it, to Miss Cherry's evident disgust, and with her feet spread wide apart, in the inelegant position that some men take, she drew her mallet backward into her skirt and struck the ball with such great force that it went through the first arch and jumped clear over the second. Naturally she was full of chagrin But she wasn't overflowing, like the old man.

"How stupid!" she exclaimed.

"Well, perhaps just a bit careless," said the old man.

"Of course, I have another try for it?"

Mr. Brown looked at Miss Cherry. But Miss Cherry shook her head.

"You have one more shot," she said, "for going through the first hoop."

"Up in Bethel," Phoebe replied, as a mild protest, "every player has three chances at the start."

"Yes," said Miss Cherry, "but down here we play by rule."

"By *your* rule," said the old man, and his lips went on twitching.

"Henry," said Miss Cherry, "it's your turn next."

Henry had a mallet that he had made himself. The head of it, he told us, was of iron-wood, and the handle of second-growth hickory. No one dared make denial, because the mallet was painted all over and striped like a barber's pole.

The farrier said it gave him the willies just to look at it. Nevertheless Henry got away to a good start, and took position in front of the cage.

The old man by this time was pretty hot. He didn't see how he could carry his partner's ball along with him, and yet his only hope lay in his being able to do so. First, however, he must run forward and roquet Henry's ball out of position. That he succeeded in doing, and was about to strike again, having placed his own ball a mallet-head's length from Henry's, when Miss Cherry objected.

"Pardon me, Mr. Brown," she said, "but, you know, you must move the ball you roquet when you make the next shot."

"I have the option of playing the other way," said Mr. Brown. "Now, up Bethel way——"

"Well, that'll be the rule for this game," said Miss Cherry in agreeing, "but it isn't fair or right."

"It's as fair for one as t'other," replied the old man, and with that he made a rather wide, swinging stroke with a view to getting his ball down behind his partner's, but the head of his mallet, being new and not properly glued on, flew off, and the handle, going forward with the momentum, struck the ball and moved it only about a foot.

All this was too much for the old man's choler. He muttered something to himself, something suppressed yet audible and familiar, and then he threw the handle bang against the barn, kicked one of the balls out of the court, and from that same exasperating place, without further word or expletive, he immediately withdrew.

"I guess," said Henry, tucking his barber's pole under his arm, "I'll go down and see if my old nags are shod."

"Yes," said Miss Cherry, "Mrs. Smale will be anxious about her dress. I must go and finish it."

Next thing I knew, as I looked round, everybody had gone but Phoebe and me. I stood, perhaps a little awkwardly, at the gate, holding it open for her to pass out. And I might tell you also, because one couldn't keep anything secret around there, that I carried the mallet, with the blue stripes and her permission, up the hill to the parsonage.

CHAPTER XI

The Tavern

THE old axiom that good wine needs no bush was not observed by the tavern of my recollection. For this tavern flaunted a sign that was large and square and much beaten by weather. The sign was supported by a cedar post erected, almost in the middle of the cross-roads, so that even those who ran might read. That is, they might have read had not the characters on the face been almost wholly obliterated by sun and sleet and snow. Nevertheless it stood there with as much significance as the inscription above the bar-room door: "Licensed to sell beer, wine and other spirituous and fermented liquors."

The roads crossed at the foot of two hills, at the very foot of the village. There stood the sign-post, and over from it, against the hillside, lay the tavern, a gaunt, square, light brick structure, with the bar-room steps at the nearest corner and a main entrance in the middle. A plank platform ran all across the front and far enough around the end to pass the bar-room door. In ordinary circumstances an old-fashioned wooden pump would have stood on one corner, but in its stead, just a few feet away, under the edge of the road, a spring of clear water appeared. The water was cold, and it shone in the sun, turning over slowly once or twice before it slipped back into the earth again, to reappear by the roadside, behind the stables, in the form of a rivulet, which, after many years away from it, at length prompted my dissertation on "The Source".

The real source of this stream was farther up, past the grist mill and behind the blacksmith's shop; but here by the tavern it made its first real appearance. Sometimes, as children, on the way to school, we used to make the interesting experiment of casting a chip of wood into the churning water, watch it glide down from sight, then run out behind the stables by the roadside, and wait for it to emerge triumphant into the light. What a weird, perilous voyage for craft so frail! How the chip must have held its breath and shut its eyes as it went hurtling and tossing through that subterranean passage! Niagara gives no more genuine thrill than this. Nor does Kakabeka, Montmorenci, or the upper chasms of the Fraser.

The water, following its course under ground, flowed beneath the bar-room door, beneath the gravelled space where steeds of noble blood have stamped at the hitching post, almost beneath the stables honoured by the memory of Lord Haddow, Prince Charlie, Pride of Perth, Perfection, and a line of other notable beasts whose pedigrees hung upon the bar-room walls.

The bar-room itself was the place of peculiar interest in those days. As to beauty it could make no boast, nor was it attractive in its plainness. Its floor was plain and bare, as was also its walls, except for the hangers that published the qualifications of specimens of live stock, the dates of auction sales. the programmes of fall fairs and the wonderful attractions and marvellous feats displayed by some travelling circus. There were the usual bar, the usual cuspidors, the usual Windsor chairs, and the very usual flavour of stale beer and cigar stubs. On the shelf behind the bar was a modest assortment of liquors, and in the middle, above the shelf, instead of the familiar picture of a horse-race, a boxing tournament or a cock-fight, the

space was used to display the likeness of some prominent politician. In the seventies there hung for years a large framed portrait of Hon. George Brown, which served in contradistinction to the numerous crude, counterfeit presentments of local stallions and bulls.

Bull, singularly enough, was the name of the landlady. She was at least a grass widow, and she seemed to enjoy dispensing liquors. It was a treat to see her plump right arm work the brass handle every time anyone called for beer, her black eyes flashing constantly, and the smooth ivory skin of her cheeks sinking into dimples with every jibe and every sally.

Sally, odd as it many seem, was the name of her daughter. She, too, perhaps to her sorrow, had black eyes and red lips and a marvellously strange look that was not of earth nor of sky. I have seen this mother and this daughter, both beauties of the same stock, the one enticing, the other threatening, serving drink to boisterous men who revelled in blatant boast and ribald jest.

Jesting and boasting were the conspicuous accomplishments, and while mighty deeds of valour can be recalled, one dare not venture to perpetuate the jokes. For the delicacies of thought and speech oftentimes were disregarded and strong drink had a wonderfully loosening effect on the tongue. But boasting, in many instances at least, is a harmless pastime, especially if you can get someone else to boast for you. Take the case of Jack Lampert. Jack was a short, stocky, young farmer who was noted for his great strength. It was said of him that once during the haying, seeing a rainstorm approaching, he went into a field with a barley fork and threw the haycocks on to the wagon, one at a time, as fast as the horses could walk. Jack was handicapped inasmuch as he could not stage a

haying scene in the bar-room. Instead he used to fold fifty-cent silver pieces with his fingers.

Then there was big Bill Benson, who went about the countryside with Lord Haddow, drew sawlogs in winter, and stopped at the tavern every time he perceived any likelihood of conviviality. His turn, so to speak, was to carry the box stove full of live coals out and set it down in the middle of the road. This feat was not likely to be performed without at least a small wager, and if a stranger could not be induced to act as victim, a drink or two on important occasions like Christmas, Hallowe'en or somebody's birthday would ease Bill's conscience. Because Bill, like many another whose profession compels him to appear in public, believed in commercializing his talent, or at least in not pandering merely, without profit, to vulgar curiosity. Under drink his bearing became heavy, his perception dull. And while he seldom lost the use of his great strength, frequently his faculties lagged until it seemed as if his great hulk acted while his mind stood still.

Still in particular did it stand one Thanksgiving night when Charlie Mitchell, anticipating the occasion, slipped some extra dry hardwood from the mill pile into the stove and sat back to await the result.

It was one of those cold autumn nights when leaves rustle on the ground, when shutters creak, when chickens leave the orchard for the coop, and cattle crouch against the stack.

The bar-room was warm and inviting. Yankee Tom had got out his fiddle, and little Jimmie Jordan was doing a clog dance to the tune of "The Wind Shook the Barley". George Grimes, who shipped more fat cattle from those parts than any other three men in the county, sat in a chair tilted against the wall, humming the tune and beating time with his fist on the

arm of the chair. Bobbie Boak, a Nova Scotian, whose paunch was like a barrel, whose calling was that of drover, who carried a stop watch and had gold in his front teeth, stood with his hands in his pockets intently watching Jimmie's twinkling little legs and spitting betimes into a flat brown cuspidor. Arthur Bisaillon, a French Canadian, whose name nobody could pronounce, and who always came in with a tin of oysters under his arm, marked time with his heel and picked his teeth with a quill. Joe the teamster, having taken a five-cent cigar on the first round of treats, sat with his eyes on the ceiling, his feet on the fender. The carpenter, with hair all round his neck like down on a chicken, was ready for oysters and more than ready for gin. Gin he could not resist, and he relished it neat, because, as he was wont to remark, it smoothed out the wrinkles in his throat, and its fumes were like hell fire.

Hell fire, indeed, the Methodist parson used to call it, and the tavern itself was the hell-hole of destruction. Not so, however, in the opinion of Hi Horner, man of all trades, who used to say, whenever he had a glass of liquor in his hand, "They claim that bread is the staff of life, but whiskey is life itself".

On this especial Thanksgiving night Hi leaned against the jamb of the door leading into the hallway, his whiskers standing straight out like a wire brush and the hair on his head clipped close like a jail-bird's. He boasted of the finest set of teeth in the township, and to prove it he could, if sufficiently provoked, bite through a tenpenny nail or take a chunk out of the hardest flint whiskey-tumbler that ever crossed a bar.

Close to Hi stood the blacksmith, who never came down to the tavern except on special occasions and always called for ale in a pewter mug. His hair, as usual, was oiled and

parted carefully all the way down at the back. He wore a mutton-chop beard whose ends were long enough to tie in a bow-knot. He had extraordinary forearms, acquired no doubt by hammering at the anvil, and he always was willing to have a trial of wrist strength with anyone, and he usually earned a drink by a simple twist.

Under the drawing of Lord Haddow stood Charley Campbell, one of the nimblest and supplest nuisances north of the Boundary. His most exquisite pastime was breaking door panels with his fists, but if only half tight he could spring into the air with the agility of a cat, kick one side of the room with one foot, and then, without touching the floor, bound across and kick the other side.

Kicking was Charley's long suit. He kicked Hi Horner in the face one First of July, but didn't even loosen a single tooth. He kicked off Finlay Ferguson's hard hat one Thanksgiving, and the row that followed lasted until they laid poor Finlay on the hill. He was a good farmer, was Finlay, but a sad humourist: like many other persons, he never seemed to know when to laugh.

But laughing was in order, even for Finlay, though it was suppressed, this Thanksgiving night when Jimmie stopped dancing and Big Bill spat on his hands as he asked whether anyone would say that he could not carry out the stove just as it stood, fire and all. Everyone knew that the top was red hot, that it was roaring inside, that even the legs were warm.

It was a tense moment. Mrs. Bull stood, arms akimbo, beside the cask of rye. Dimples appeared in her cheeks, and a flash of merriment in her eyes. For she was inured to the adventure, well schooled in the cunning knack of letting the men have their fling. Sally, resting thin elbows on the

bar and blanched cheeks in the hollows of her hands, fixed her eyes on a stranger who half sat on the window sill, in the shadow, behind the stove. Her stare, no doubt, was a challenge to this man, for until now he had not suffered his eyes to turn away from feasting on her comeliness. Perhaps it was fate, perhaps it was perdition; but, whatever it was, some irresistible impulse must have surged within them.

"Will anyone bet me I can't do it?" shouted Bill, again spitting on his hands.

No one replied.

"Will anyone stand the drinks if I do it?"

All but Bill himself realized that the stove was red hot, and, knowing Bill, all laughed to themselves at the prospect of seeing the local giant thwarted at last.

Just then the stranger came out from the shadow. Then we could see, and Sally also should have seen, all the more plainly, that he had an uncertain kind of good looks, with black eyes, a flowing black moustache, rather flashy clothes and a brilliant scarf pin.

"I tell you what I'll do," he said, addressing Bill: "if you carry that stove out, I'll carry it in again."

Bill looked aghast. Here after all was one who challenged his hitherto acknowledged supremacy. What could it mean? It was not possible that this upstart of ordinary physique could wrest from him the sweetness of his present glory. Let him try.

At this turn of events Mrs. Bull's dimples disappeared, but Sally didn't change a hair. Bill, striding over towards the stove, contemptuous of the stranger, stretched his arms and shouted for someone to open the door. Two or three jumped forward, and almost before anyone could tell just what was happening, Bill went out through the door, holding by some superhuman resistance the hot stove in front of him. The

pipes clattered to the floor and smoke filled the room. Everyone rushed towards the door, and when the last of us got out we saw Bill standing serenely over the stove warming his hands. Presently he looked about him, and then called for the stranger.

The stranger, true to type, had remained inside to snatch a word with Sally. But now he stood boldly silhouetted in the doorway.

"Now, stranger," said Bill, "it's your turn."

"There's no hurry," replied the stranger. "Let's all cool off."

"The stove too," said Bill, with a sneer.

"The stove too," said the stranger: "I didn't say when I'd carry it back."

There was something tantalizing in his tone, for Bill sprang towards him and was about to strike when Sally rushed in between them. The stranger drew the girl to one side, and then addressed Bill.

"I didn't come here," he said slowly, "to fight. Nor do I intend to carry a red-hot stove. But I tell you what I'll do: we'll wait till the stove cools off, and then, to make up for the heat, I'll carry it in again with Sally sitting on top."

While the stove was cooling off everyone went inside again, and the stranger stood the treats all round. Then he stood them a second time, taking whiskey himself, neat, and swallowing it with a little gurgle that made Joe look narrowly at him across the edge of the bar.

The bar was not long enough for all to stand up to it abreast, so the stranger stepped back to let Yankee Tom reach for his glass. As he did so, Sally came from behind, and looked saucily up at him. With that he crooked his elbow and invited the girl to sit therein and put one arm round his neck. In that

position he walked with her triumphantly, as we thought, out and placed her neatly on top of the stove. Then he stooped down and with what seemed like the greatest of ease he lifted the stove, Sally and all, and carried it gracefully into its proper place. And he did more than that, for a few nights later he disappeared, and, what was always regarded as a remarkable co-incidence, Sally disappeared at the same time.

Nobody ever seemed to hear anything more about Sally, and in time she was forgotten. Perhaps not altogether forgotten, for there is one at least who remembers her black eyes, her red lips and the look that was not of earth nor of sky.

CHAPTER XII

The Red Schoolhouse

THE sideroad and concession crossed where the schoolyard lay — a parcel of land, perhaps two acres in extent, fenced off from the outside corner of a corner farmstead. Denuded of everything that nature had bestowed, the plot itself presented in its various aspects nothing but a bare and forbidding prospect. But it was not intended that nature should be outraged. Having cut down the beeches and the elms, natural monuments which had raised before the settler their sureties of a fertile soil, the trustees, those misguided miscreants whom we have tolerated throughout Canada for fifty years—the trustees took thought again and planted saplings here and there along the four sides. As an unconscious protest we used to climb trees in the nearby fields, pick gum in the neighbouring swamp, or play hide-and-seek amongst the slabs and columns of the adjoining graveyard.

The graveyard was put there no doubt because it was there that we all should end soon or late. It was a Baptist graveyard, and as the school was composed of Protestants and Catholics there was but little respect for denominational distinctions or any visible reverence for consecrated clay. Clay it was that covered the schoolyard and clay covered the newly-made graves. Burials did not take place often, but it was not a remarkable co-incidence for the teacher to be conjugating the verb "to be" while the minister was repeating the familiar, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes". We had the beginning. We had the ultima thule.

Ultimate indeed was this incongruity. And as to the schoolhouse itself, one might suppose that it was called red because commonly it was misjudged as being well-read. Certainly if it ever had flaunted the first primary colour its pristine brilliance had changed long ago to the cold drab of the weather-beaten. Beaten assuredly it was, not only by weather but also by time and the depredations of healthy children. Its style was not Grecian, nor Georgian, nor even Colonial. It was plain clapboard, standing sheer to the elements, on the inner side of the yard, so that the outer wall at the back could serve as part of the fence. To either end a small porch, without door, was attached. A pump, long in disuse, leaned hard by, and in each of the farther corners there was a small outhouse. And while the school was ludicrous on the outside, as one reviews it now, it was equally ludicrous within.

There were two distinctive rooms, the Little Room and the Big Room. It was our privilege to enter the Little Room first. There we beheld a space about twenty feet square and ten feet high. At the farther end a blackboard extended from one side to the other, and underneath it, eight inches above the floor, there was a platform. At one end of this platform stood the teacher's desk, a high slanting device with four spindling legs that were held together four inches from the floor by four wooden bars pegged at the four corners. These bars, or at least the outside one, which was flush with the edge of the platform, served another important purpose by supporting when the school was over-crowded four boyish legs whose feet dangled in front and whose nether supports reposed on the hard floor beneath. This hard floor supported also a third small boy, but he had to sit in behind, wholly underneath the desk, with his feet thrust out like a performing bear or tucked

below like a Scandinavian tailor. For him there was no dangling. He even could not kneel without bumping his head or imagining himself a prince held tight in a dungeon.

To be that boy it was my privilege in those far-off, tender years. Years, I write, but was it not an epoch?

With me under the desk, but with legs dangling over the bar in front, sat two others, a boy long dead, named Jim, and his cousin, long lost, named Dick. Of us three Jim was the oldest, and he immediately declared a dictatorship as to the preferred positions in front. Already he had disrupted our morale, especially mine, by wearing long pants, of striped cottonade, with deep side pockets. Into these pockets he loved to thrust whole pieces of chalk obtained stealthily by me from the desk's encumbered maw, just above my head. As a reward for my enterprise, Jim would perform the single shuffle, making for me a place in front beside himself, much to Dick's combined discomfort and disgust. For it was Jim's contention that Dick, being a cousin, had first place in his affections—next to chalk—and that if I should produce the chalk he would, with justice, degrade Dick.

But Dick, like many another boy thrown thus upon his mettle, had predatory instincts of his own, and therefore it never was long before he could reclaim the seat by delivering what always looked like the longest and fattest piece of chalk I had ever seen. Then I would have to crawl back into the shadows, beaten and bested, full of shame and the study of revenge.

Revenge never has promised so much sweetness. And at length, urged by the ghosts of my forefathers and in order to render my revenge supreme, I attempted to get a whole handful of chalk all at one haul. The teacher's back was towards me when I crept forth, but when I stretched with toes atip to

make the great grab, one end of a pointer came down upon my head, causing me to withdraw quickly, sink ignominiously to my knees, and creep with inglorious countenance into my retreat. Dick sat triumphant, while I, led by the ear in deep disgrace, was placed between two ruffians on one of the side benches.

The side benches were indeed a device of the devil. It is bad enough when children are placed for hours at a time, two at a desk, or even one at a desk, in straight rows, this way and that way; but when it comes to plain pine benches put in the aisle between desks and wall, it is too much for human endurance.

It was on one of these side benches that I made my first adventure in the furtive pastime of fishing for rats. I use the word "fishing" not because we used it then, but because we fished much, through knot-holes in the floor, but caught little. Not a highly intellectual pastime, one might confess, and yet it had points of fascination. A bent pin tied to a string served as tackle, and for bait anything would do from a shred of slate rag to a morsel of cheese. Cheese, in the circumstances, was the *pièce de resistance,* and the rats rose to it like sand flies at twilight. A simile out of proportion. Nevertheless I have seen rats swarming in the space between the school floor and the soft earth beneath, and once, when the teacher moved the wood-box, a mother rat ran across the boards, to the commingled delight and fear of the children; and after she had been hurled, all crumpled, into outer space, the nest was dragged forth, and ten hairless young ones were sent squeaking and sprawling upon the floor like miniature piglets.

The floor contained numerous fishing-holes, but we failed to realize that none of them was big enough for a rat to pass

through. Thus with joyous patience, yet surreptitiously, we fished at every opportunity, and oftentimes we jerked a rat up against a hole and caught a glimpse of his hairy nose before it dropped back again into the gloom. But once—oh, only once!—Dick, making his first overture towards a peace, passed to me, from his seat under the desk, a long line with a fish-hook tied tight at one end. The line ran under the bench, lengthwise, and therefore most of it could not be seen. I fixed a piece of fried egg on the hook and dropped it into the widest hole. Like a trout in fly time, a big rat gulped it. I gave a yank, and immediately there was the most agonized squealing and scratching I ever had heard. In terror I let the string go, but Dick,who held the other end, drew it taut, revealing the rat's mouth and whiskers and increasing in violence the squealing and scratching. Then followed an immense hubbub. The children shouted and danced, and the teacher, not knowing what was happening, put fingers in his ears and called vainly for order. But confusion continued, and as the line still lay, almost imperceptibly, under the bench, nobody could point to the cause. Dick by this time had a foot on the farther end of the line, just where it emerged from the bench, and was looking on with keen delight but with no show of guilt.

To discover the cause was the teacher's duty, but round the rat the pressure was so great that he could not immediately elbow a way through. Meantime the squealing and scratching continued until just as the teacher squeezed in upon the scene someone jostled Dick off his balance—and the rat dropped out of sight. The line swished after it, and sometimes, even to this day, whenever I have used fishing tackle I have thought of Dick's adventure and of his piece of twisted linen, a precious possession, that went with distressing suddenness into the unsavoury burrows of ratdom, to be followed in the same

breath by an occurrence without precedent—a stampede from the Big Room through the partition doorway into the Little Room.

The Big Room was composed of the big boys and girls and the Big Teacher. Into it we gazed betimes with awe and expectation, for in the natural course of events we should undergo some day the exquisite ordeal of passing into it, acknowledged as fit subjects for the higher education. But the higher education was not regarded generally as being of much account in the everyday life of our people. For without it you were a carpenter as good as if you could parse a sentence or define a noun. Without it you could plow as straight as if you could describe a circle or solve a problem given by Euclid. Without it you could set a tire or lay a brick with as nice precision as if you knew the date of the Norman Conquest. Without it you could patch a shoe or fell a tree with as much assurance as if you knew by heart "The Vision of Mirza". And without it you could knit a sock, render lard, or bake a pie with skill as fine as if you knew longitude from latitude or could name the great water routes of the world.

But the water route that we all knew best was the one that lay between the school-house and the nearest farmyard, for the chronic indisposition of the pump and well in the playground made it necessary for us to transport water from another source. A patent pail was the method, and four willing arms were the means. But try as we might the water, when at length it was placed on the bench, never was in what a drover would call prime condition. If we walked leisurely in summer time it would be warm. If we ran it would spill. And whether we walked or ran dust surely covered it. But in winter time, when we turned from allaying thirst to keeping out the cold, conditions were a little more favourable.

Even at that, I recall a ludicrous incident to a late autumn afternoon. Snow had been falling unexpectedly in thick, heavy flakes. Already the ground was covered, but Dick and I, undaunted, volunteered to fetch water. The sharp change of weather had caught us without mittens, and by the time we were returning our fingers began to feel numb. Then we started to run, and the water ran with us, at least, some of it ran with us, but most of it ran out. Dick held that we could make up the loss by putting in snow, which would melt and nobody need know any difference. But the snow failed to melt. Instead it mixed with the water and took the form of slush. This mongrel concoction, in blissful ignorance of its devilishness, we introduced to the school. As a libation it was a dismal failure, but as a weapon for mischief it put the old reliable, the pea gun, into the fire. Immediately we entered the room a dozen hands went up for the privilege of passing the pail. Up and down the aisles the pail was passed, and the children, instead of drinking, grabbed handfuls and with the feverish rapidity of many machinations of the devil they began to pelt one another with melting snow. Within two minutes the place was so bespattered that the teacher, who was marked by philosophy, being of cheerful texture, ordered us all out to finish the bout in the open. First, however, he had one request to make. Long had he suffered under the galling fire of the pea gun, and while he had the disposition to recognize it as an institution, he now saw a chance to supplant it with the snowball. He made his request in these words: "All ye who have pea guns draw nigh and cast forth."

We leaped to obey, and soon we saw an armful of pithless elder stalks consigned to the flames. The groans that followed from the boys were equalled only by the roar of the old box stove.

To the stove, perhaps after all, we should not commit thus summarily the enlivening pea gun, for although it might be regarded as a nuisance, this toy had its proper season, when the elder stalk was at is best, just as had also the leek, with its insufferable odour, the elm root, with its fine Havana flavour, and the spring run of suckers. The pea gun was known also in my grandfather's day, and one teacher, as I recall the account, arrogated to himself the right to use it as a whipping-rod. He always selected the biggest stalk in the school, and once when he thrashed a boy across the back the boy affirmed that the stick sounded hollow. The teacher replied with a few strokes of second-growth hickory and asked with unfeigned glee whether that sounded hollow. Years afterwards, when the rising of 1837 took place, this teacher and his former pupil came togther again as rebels in the same company. They had marched for two days without food, and the older man, weakening, began to lag behind. Presently the rest of the company fell upon a cranberry bog, and after eating until satisfied, they took up the march again much refreshed. But one of them remembered his former teacher, and filling his cap with berries he went back to where the man sat exhausted.

"Here," he said, "eat some of these."

He ate a few of the berries, and the younger man, patting him on the back, said, "There, that doesn't sound quite so hollow."

It is now four by the clock, the hour when all well-regulated public schools, even the old red one, must close.

CHAPTER XIII

The Revival

RELIGION, like everything else, had with us its periods of depression, and if oecasional revival meetings had not been held it would have been toueh and go between the devil and the divine.

The devil, as we knew him, was a resoureeful being, cunning, artful and, beyond all other things, plausible. And we knew him well. For he passed mueh of his time in our midst, executing his designs in the most adroit manner and suceeeding beyond our worst fears in corrupting an otherwise godfearing people.

He was a very sympathetie devil. As I reeall it, many of us went to him without mueh provocation. For he eould be found almost anywhere, and he had many ageneies. The tavern was the most attraetive. It we regarded as his headquarters. But he had other points of advantage. He could be found at threshings, logging bees, danees, paring bees, pienies, and I have heard it said that he had the audaeity to enter the holy preeinets of the chureh. As to that I have no eonelusive evidence apart from the faet that old John Noyes beeame "possessed" one night during Revival because the leader started to sing "Throw Out the Life-line" while John was still praying. Everybody agreed that John had prayed long enough, that he was something of a nuisanee, anyway, and that whenever he lost his temper, whieh he lost oftener than anything else, he became like the Gergesenian swine, a ready lodging-plaee for the devil But devil or no devil, John with-

drew from the meeting, resigned later on from the church, and ever afterwards until he died, the year of the San Jose scale, he lived in quiet retirement, doing his few chores night and morning, and not bothering, as far as we could see, over religion, theology or his soul's salvation.

Salvation, of course, was the grand purpose of the Revival. It was intended also that there should be a great quickening of religious fervour, especially amongst the young and that the whole community should be purged of its ungodliness. its worldliness, its deadly indifference to things spiritual.

Indifferent we must have been in normal times, for we never knew how bad we were until the revivalists came along and told us. Then we realized the enormity of our offences and the little chance we had of entering the pearly gates. Some of us who did not profess to have any religion, and others of us who were Presbyterians, attended dances occasionally and indulged in so frivolous and sinful pastimes as playing cards, singing secular songs, going to races, and, most of all, indulging in strong drink. And there were as well the secret sins. On them the revivalists always laid great stress. Sins known only by ourselves and God! That is where the revivalists struck home, where they touched everybody. Secretly we all were more or less covetous, selfish, lustful, deceitful, jealous, avaricious. With these sins in our hearts we dare not meet God face to face. We dare not meet even our fellow men. We had to slink away, with lowered heads, abashed by our own secret vices, smitten by our own consciences. We might lie and cheat and steal and not be revealed. But God knew. We might hoard our treasures and heap up our gold, but it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.

The eye of a needle! What did Jesus mean that day as he spoke these words, standing on the coast of Judea beyond Jordan, after the rich young man had gone away sorrowful, having great possessions? Did he mean, as some held, that it is easier for a camel to go through the Needle's Eye, a small gate in the walls of Jerusalem, which is possible, or did he mean, as others held, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle, which is impossible? If he meant a sewing needle, then the rich man had no chance. But we were not content to let it go at that, for in Matthew XIX, 29, it says: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven". We were enjoined by Charlie, the agnostic, and by Mrs. Hammill, an arch critic, to observe that here Jesus plainly indicates that a rich man may enter, though hardly, into the kingdom. If so, then, what else but the Needle's Eye could Jesus mean when he makes the comparison in the next verse? Mrs. Hammill, who awed us by her knowledge of grammar, said that it all depended on the article and on capitalization. If in the original text the article were "the" and not "a", as translated in the unrevised version, the comparison almost certainly was to the Needle's Eye, an aperture through which it was possible for a camel, after having its load removed, to stoop and squeeze through. Plainly, therefore, the inference to be drawn was that the rich man, throwing aside his riches, might squeeze into the kingdom.

But riches with us was not a besetting sin. The incident, therefore, of the comparison to the camel having passed, conditions of more immediate interest were considered and our secret sins dissected, much to our discomfiture and chagrin. The local parson, we had reason to suspect, might have known

or divined our peculiar weaknesses, but it was marvellous how directly a visiting revivalist could diagnose our individual cases and reveal sins that we long had believed to be outlived and forgotten. Not that he ever mentioned names, but everyone knew, for instance, when he emphasized jealousy, that he included all the members of the choir, when he charged pride and haughtiness he meant Lizzie Lavery; jealousy and two-facedness, Mrs. Simpkins; selfishness and vanity, Henry Perkins; inordinate display, Mrs. Ezekiel Brown, who always wore the puffiest sleeves and the largest bustle; secret sins, me. As a matter of fact, whenever it came to secret sins I hadn't a word of defence, and several times I was on the point of going forward.

Going forward was the sinner's avowal before the world of his sinfulness and his penitence. To some backward persons it was a hard ordeal. Others went without a qualm. But in most instances confession was a result of prayer. It was the practice to ask whether anyone present desired special prayers to be presented in his behalf. The request was made standing. And having once stood it was not so hard as it otherwise might have been to confess sin, step out into the aisle and go forward to the penitents' bench.

The bench never would have been crowded had it not been for those few gentle souls who realized most keenly their need of salvation and who, like deadhead applauders in a theatre, always could be relied on to give the movement a start. One of these was old Mrs. Bake. With her went also Miss Smith, the dressmaker, Mrs. Pigeon, who everybody said was on her last legs, and old Mr. Mullett, who never failed to start "Rescue the Perishing" without provocation and who shouted "Amen! Amen!" with unexcelled frequency and emotion.

Emotion, it must be confessed, stirred in everyone's breast. And whether one responded or not, none could set aside lightly the fact that the call had come. A great stillness would settle upon the meeting, and we boys at the back would stop throwing conversation lozenges, wondering who would be the first to give his experience.

Experience meetings usually took place near the end of the Revival. They would begin with Mrs. Bake rising and saying with a thin, pithless voice that she thanked the Lord for what He had done for her. Immediately the leader would shout "Hallelujah! who'll be the next?" And just as Mrs. Pigeon would be rising old Mr. Mullett would begin "Rescue the Perishing". The first verse finished, and while the old man would be taking in breath to begin the second, someone would start to pray. With that the old man would fall back on "Amen! Amen!" and there would be some groaning, much singing, with a tincturing of tears.

Tears frequently accompanied the experience. Who could have withheld them the memorable night on which Henry Perkins, wild Charlie Mitchell, and the local Member all gave their experiences. It had seemed enough that so notorious an offender as Charlie had been converted, while to see the Member go forward was the sensation of the year. Charlie and Henry had agreed before the meeting began that they would speak out, and it seems that the Member, perhaps uncertain about his condition, but professing a change of heart, had obtained from the revivalist a certificate of conversion.

Certificates of that kind were not common, and Henry Perkins, at least, did not demand one. He stood up like a man

and thanked the Lord for what had been done for him. He had been steeped in sin, but now he was free (Hallelujah!). The commotion that followed as Charlie Mitchell rose to his feet, was enough to drown all but the first bar of "Rescue the Perishing". Joe Ham said afterwards that Charlie was as white as a sheet, and Miss Pringle avowed that he shook like a leaf. It was known that Mary Mullet had warned her father not to be shouting "Amen!" so often, but as soon as Charlie stood up, the old man, having failed in his attempt to start his favourite hymn, shouted "Amen!" and was just opening up to repeat it when Mary nudged him in the ribs, and he settled back in the seat with a thud.

"I thank the Lord," Charlie began, and then he seemed to choke and all fill up. But presently he began again.

"I've been a terrible bad sinner in my day, I have," he began. "I've got drunk. I've swore. I've lied. I've played cards and danced and committed sins not fit to mention. But thank the Lord, I'm saved."

"Amen!" shouted old Mr. Mullet, "hit or miss."

Here was an opportunity for Miss Pringle to start "We'll Cross the River of Jordan". And as soon as the singing died down the Member got up.

"All along," he said, "I was in doubt whether or not I was actually converted. For I had led a worldly life, but, thank the Lord, now I am convinced that I have been converted. Some have said that they could not convert me, but," he said, reaching into his pocket, like every good politician, for the certificate the revivalist had given, "if any person is in doubt about it, I have here the document to prove it."

"Hallelujah!" shouted the revivalist, and in the same breath he started to sing "There is a Fountain".

During the singing Henry Perkins came down the aisle, with his dicky sticking outside his waistcoat, and began to wrestle with Charlie, the agnostic. There were a number present who were known to be seeking salvation, and it had been whispered here and there that Charlie was one of them. Miss Pringle, Lizzie Lavery, old Mr. Mullet and Mrs. Pigeon were moving up and down the aisles asking for any who were not at peace with the Lord, and the revivalist by this time was intermittently singing and praying and shouting encouragement.

I could see Miss Pringle coming perilously near to me. I was sitting a little apart from the other boys, but close enough for them to overhear anything that might be said. I hung my head and waited for the onslaught, because I knew that Miss Pringle, having sung with me in the choir every Sunday for six months, was interested in my future estate. Bending over me, the gentle lady asked timidly yet distinctly enough to be overheard by the other boys,

"Don't you want to be saved?"

For a moment I was unable to answer. If I had answered that I wanted to be saved, then she would have started in to save me. And if I had said that I didn't want to be saved, I might have been struck down dead right then and there and been lost. Therefore I answered in as low a tone as possible and trying to be non-committal, "Mebbe".

Then one of the boys snickered. That was enough for me: I knew right away that I didn't want to be saved, that no power on earth could save me, that I was forever and eternally damned.

"Please, Miss Pringle," I said, "if you don't mind I'd rather not be saved."

And before Miss Pringle had time to reply everyone close at hand was distracted by Henry Perkins. For Henry had stopped beside the agnostic.

"Are you at peace, Charlie?" he asked.

"I am," said Charlie.

"But you haven't been converted."

"No."

"Would you like us to pray for you?"

"I would not."

"Don't you think it's dangerous," Henry asked, "to keep putting it off? You never know," he argued, "what a day nor an hour may bring forth. It's well to be prepared. I may come up to the village to-morrow and find you dead. Too late!"

"Oh, I'll be alive all right, never fear," said Charlie.

"But you never know," said Henry. "You might be dead."

"You come up," said Charlie, "I'll be alive all right. And I'll be asking you some questions about the Bible and religion and maybe, if I see you can follow me, about theology. I'll be asking you who was Cain's wife. And I'll be asking you about Jonah and the whale. And I'll be asking you about others of the miracles. And I'll want you to tell me about Mary and Joseph, about the resurrection and John on Patmos."

Henry looked at Charlie with a puzzled expression, and then he gave again the warning, "You never know what a day nor an hour may bring forth".

"You come up in the morning," Charlie replied. "I'll take a chance on being here. And bring your Bible with you."

"Hallelujah!" shouted the revivalist. "We'll close with the singing of 'Shall we Gather at the River?' "

CHAPTER XIV

The Fall Fair

EVERYBODY knew the date set for the Fall Fair, still it was the duty of the Secretary to hang notices in public places, especially in post-offices and taverns. Local pride demanded at least that much publicity, because every competition that offered a prize was open to the world. And that world was not merely the little world of our daily walk and conversation, for it reached out in all directions and embraced places whose very names stirred the imagination, hearing them pronounced glibly by the ashman and the fish pedlar. The ashman is remembered because he was always talking about other worlds than ours, and he never failed to leave bars of hard yellow soap on the back porch; the fish pedlar because it was he who first revealed the phenomenon of ice in July. So that our Fair permitted you to exhibit your Shropshires from Tuckersmith, your Berkshires from McKillop, your Suffolks from Hullett, your Percherons from Fullarton, your fruits and your grains from the Boundary, and your knitting and baking and embroidery from either of the two Easthopes.

It was open to the world.

Could any fair be fairer?

The ground lay half a mile from the village, between an imposing row of poplars and old man Elson's rhubarb patch. It was not extensive, but it was well fenced with boards nailed close together. On three hundred and sixty-four days of every year it was indeed a sad and forlorn object. Even the

Crystal Palace, that scene of famous conquests in needlework and crocheting, was suffered to bleach in summer and crouch under snow in winter. We used to pass by it every day on our way to school, and if we deigned to peep through a knot hole, it was with a shudder that we beheld the forbidding aspect of the place. It presented indeed a gloomy and austere prospect. But in winter it was worst of all. From the road we could see the top of the Crystal Palace. We could count the icicles hanging from the eaves and see snow clinging to the roof. No sign was there of human touch. No track led to the door. No smoke curled upwards.

But what a change on Fair Day! Gone all the drab and forlorn aspect. Gone the icicles and the snow. Instead there was a scene of animation and colour. For since early morning, up the Tuckersmith line and down the gravel, had come wagons laden with hogs and sheep, trucks carrying grains and fruits, fakirs afoot and hired men ahorse, democrats full of families, itinerant merchants with tents and cases of pop and lemons, shining top buggies bearing youth and beauty, men leading stallions and men leading bulls—all coming to a focus at the Fair. The village appeared to teem and swell with people. And every shed was occupied, every shelter, all the tavern stables, every hitching-post, every possible fence corner out as far as the Fair ground and even beyond.

And at the Fair ground itself what a convergence! The entrance fee was twenty-five cents for adults and fifteen cents for children. Even fifteen cents, when the most you have is twenty-five, is a considerable sum of money, especially if you have in view the purchase of a throw at the dolls, a drink of pink lemonade and one cornucopia of grapes.

I have in mind a little boy who found himself sitting alone on the front step of his home in the village and wondering

how he could make twenty-five cents do the work of thirty. He knew that Big Angus would be at the gate and that one might just as well try to slip past St. Peter as slip past the dour Scot. And to make the Fair for this boy a success four things were required—entrance, one throw at the dolls, one glass of pink lemonade and one cornucopia of grapes. To procure these things he must start out with thirty cents. But how could one make thirty out of only twenty-five? The store was just across the way, and it occurred to the lad that if he were to have the quarter changed into five-cent pieces the storekeeper, who was not noted for giving overweight, might make the impossible blunder of giving six pieces instead of five. And that is exactly what the storekeeper did give.

A miracle had been performed! The lad ran out, but he had not gone far before he stopped to make it certain that he was not dreaming. And, sure enough, there in the palm of his hand lay the six little shining pieces of silver. There may have been a qualm of conscience, but in any case I can say this much, that if that storekeeper can be found I myself will return to him gladly his five cents, with interest compounded at the rate of six per cent. per annum.

You must follow the boy into the Fair, and with him our little community will be revealed to you—our conceits, our whims, our oddities. You will not be overcome by the extent of ground, but you will realize that on the whole it is so well confined that nothing will escape you. In short, you are at all times within sight and hearing of everything. So that you need not be disturbed if you hear the grunting of hogs and the whickering of horses synchronizing with shouts of "Lemonade, forty feet in the shade, and it shines with the light of a diamond". Nor should you whimper if the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle puts to shame the raucous

yelling of the dollman, whose cajolery is limited to the continuous repetition of, "Hit a doll and win a cigar! Three shots for five—a nickel, half a dime; will neither make you, break you nor buy you a farm".

A farm! And to think that this man himself onee was a farmer, this man who now stands there and stakes a eigar against your five eents and your skill at throwing! He also makes the alluring offer that if you hit the same doll three times in suceession he will give you a dollar.

Could anything be fairer?

And yet Josiah Judson declared at revival that it is gambling. As to that, some of us never have seen the dollman as a gambler. We have seen him as an instigator of an ancient and honourable and somewhat hazardous game of chance. And of all games of this eharaeter none has equalled the dolls. For these audaeious puppets quieken one's primitive instinets, saying, "Hit us if you dare!" and then one in partieular seems to offer itself apart from the others, saying, "Hit *me!* Hit *me!*" No one with a seruple of manhood left in him could ignore a ehallenge like that. No boy could overlook it. And, anyway, there is about the dolls a kind of human appeal. Like many of us, they show marks of buffeting and are a little down at heel. Then, again, although they are only dolls, they represent humanity, and so as individuals they are amusing earieatures of persons we know. Gaze, for instanee, at the one in the middle, the one with the nanny-goat whiskers and pug nose. It looks more like Mike O'Hara than any of Mike's own family, and it has all that bold Irishman's defiant attitude. Long have I wished to hit it square between the eyes, not that I nourish any ill feeling for Mike, but beeause it is so impudent, so provoking, so bedevilingly Irish. And it is above all else full of eontrariness. In that also it is like Mike. For Mike does his

spring plowing in fall and his fall plowing in spring. He has no idea of rotation. His wheat will be shelling in head while his hay still lies in cock. Nor has he much regard for the eternal fitness of things, for he would rather trap minks than haul cordwood, and Sunday, after mass, is unhallowed by the scandalous pastime of quoits or euchre.

Euchre is a game dear to the heart of the widow McVey. But the widow declares that never has she turned a card on Sunday, and, please God, she never will. Among the dolls she is represented by the one in the striped wincey dress and red hair. One small boy always tries to hit her, because one Saturday she spanked him half-way up her green gage tree.

Spanking, by the way, seems to be turning from a pastime into a science. The long-armed doll with the large hands and heavy black eyebrows is its personification. But it shows more marks of violence than any other doll in the group, and it seems to be on the verge of collapsing. Beside it hangs a little bewizened doll with flaxen hair and a form like a clothespin. It reveals the likeness and simpleness of Bessie Biddle, who always boasted that when she was born her head could be hidden under a teacup. She died one fearful night when the dog howled and strange whizzings were heard as far away as the next concession. She was so frail that big Bill Benson picked up the coffin and carried it on his shoulder all the way from the cottage to the grave.

But in another way just now big Bill is testing his strength at a machine whose resistance is indicated on a high pole marked off in feet and inches. With a great wooden mallet in his hands Bill lifts his arms high above his head, and muscles bulge the sleeves of his coat. Then he strikes the machine. Up rushes the indicator, and the barker in charge announces that Bill has come within two inches of breaking the record.

With that Bill immediately throws off his coat and rolls up his sleeves. The spot where the mallet strikes he regards intently for a moment. Then he looks up at the indicator, and spits on his hands. To his greatest height he stretches himself, poises the mallet high above his head, and then brings it down with a tremendous thud. Up rushes the indicator, but for some unaccountable reason it stops an inch below the record. Bill regards it wistfully, and while he is thus occupied you might be pleased to look at some other aspect of our community, because you can return at any time and still find Bill with this new fame almost, but not quite, his.

You might be pleased to notice a few of our leading citizens. The local Member has not arrived yet. He always comes late, driving a span of fancy roadsters hitched to a single buggy, with a coach dog running underneath. He will be late to-day, as usual, but in plenty of time to shake hands with everybody, ask about everybody, praise everything, and in due course of time, before the long shadows creep across the grass, discuss, in a well-prepared speech, the leading questions of the day. Meanwhile you have an opportunity to cast an eye here and there. You will observe that the tent staked over against the Crystal Palace and the other close to the Horticultural Pavilion give a touch of wild life to the scene, and that on closer scrutiny, with their flaps turned back, they reveal an array of tempting libations and sweetmeats that make our thirty cents look like the vanishing point. Near the first tent you see one of our local preachers. His circuit takes in Salem and Beulah, leaving us with only one service in the Methodist church each Sunday. He is talking to the schoolteacher, who got her third-class certificate at the age of eighteen and who, to quote her own father, is "jist fu' o' education". There is some talk of the preacher proposing to her

yet, and, in fact, it is whispered about that he was seen going down in her direction one night last week. Who knows? She looks pretty spick in her starched dimity, chip hat and pink stockings. That's Mrs. Ezekiel Brown standing near them. She is the wife of the owner of our three mills—cider, saw, and grist. She has on a new lustre dress made by the new dressmaker. Some think the bustle is too pronounced, and I must confess that she left an impression when she walked up the aisle of the church last Sunday night. Most of the dresses have overskirts of embroidery, with starched blouses and mutton-leg sleeves. Some squeamish persons complain of too much open work, but they would regard it as a total eclipse if placed beside the fashions of a later generation. For the blouses stick up under the chin, with frilling at the top, and the skirts at least touch the ground if they do not form a train behind, giving every galoot at the Fair something to stand on while gawking at the prize-ring.

The prize-ring is, of course, the great show place of the Fair. All the big stock parades there, and there it is that the best horseflesh is displayed. It performs also a more intimate, subtler function, for if a young girl should accept a young man's invitation to ride around the ring with him in his buggy she might just as well announce her betrothal and be done with it. There goes Betty Butson at this very moment. Frank Farquhar is cranking his new buggy with the rubber tires, and as sure as Satan she's climbing into it. She, too, is wearing a new dress made at home of fluffy stuff called seersucker. It is quite effective and not expensive. They'll make an excellent match. Henry Harvey is competing also in the single class. He looks pretty gay in his striped blazer beside Lizzie Lavery, who is, if anything, a little grave in her black farmer's satin, which was all the fashion a year ago.

The judge, standing in the middle of the ring, is the local farrier. He always wears his fine kip boots, with the red tops, on Fair Day, and he just loves to crack that whip and appear to be horsey. His annual joke is to take a third-prize ticket and put it on a first-prize exhibit and then stand back, leaning on the guard rail, and laugh at the chagrin of the owner.

On the guard rail, by the ringside, lean also Joe, the teamster, smoking his choice five-center; Charlie Mitchell, waiting for night to fall, so that he can perform at the tavern; Jimmie Jordan, with a little peak cap, and the village doctor, who wears a brown straw hat with a rolling brim, a black alpaca coat and a white waistcoast. He is moving away, and the others are following. Perhaps they hear the man shouting, "Roll up, tumble up! If you can't get up, throw your money up". No, it is the local Member standing on the steps of the Horticultural Pavilion and about to begin his speech. Showing deference to him, all other cajoling ceases, even the dollman's; and Big Bill, with becoming respect, leans on the mallet and listens to the merits of the National Policy.

This diversion is not attractive to Henry Perkins and Mrs. Charlie Simpkins. Henry's squashes received a first prize and Mrs. Simpkins's a second prize. These two, neighbours and distantly related, were the only exhibitors in that class. Naturally they are very proud, and they have been standing beside their exhibits receiving congratulations, for they are highly esteemed. Unfortunately their location is at the farther end of the Pavilion, just out of hearing of the new Member. But they come forward and listen patiently, until someone makes a move to withdraw. Then they, too, slip away, being on the side of politics opposed to the Member, and soon the small boy, jostling on the back of a wagon-load of hogs, overlooks them reloading their squashes, while Jerry

O'Brien chases a Shropshire ewe that has run loose. The boy overlooks also the wholesome excitement of the general leave-taking, and as the wagon swings out into the road he sees the long procession of home-faring folk, a procession that reaches all the way from the big gates to the top of the village hill, where it disappears. And he is content. For he has had a throw at the dolls, has drunk pink lemonade and consumed one cornucopia of grapes.

Could any Fair be fairer?

CHAPTER XV

The Choir

BEING young and therefore enthusiastic, I always arrived early at church, and oftentimes I was the first member to take his place in the choir. I mention this merely to show that we had no high-toned notions as to wearing surplices or entering in a body. Some of us came early and some late, taking our places as we came, but each one was imbued with the determination to sing his *possible*. I was the only juvenile member. Perhaps that is not a noteworthy distinction, but it is not every man who can boast that he was a boy soprano and sang in a village choir at the age of ten. As to myself, if I had any quality at all as a singer I attribute it to ancestry and early training. For my grandfather used to sing the baritone part of "Larboard Watch" with me on his knee, and my mother taught me the scale before I could read. Consequently my attainments were discussed at apple-paring and quilting bees, for there was some local pride in the fact that I could go up to high C until I reached the age of fourteen, when my voice cracked; that Henry Perkins, our well-known basso, could go down to low C if in form, and that when we struck these two notes, these two extremities, together, as frequently we succeeded in doing, especially at tea-meetings and socials, the sound produced, as Maria Smith confided to my mother, could be likened only to the hosannas of the blest. So that whatever honour there might have been, it was divided equally between Henry and me.

Henry, like an astute politician, always arrived a few minutes late, but always in time for the first hymn. I can see him now coming through the door, patting his hair into shape and feeling to make sure that his dicky is inside his waistcoat. He is slightly bow-legged, and his toes turn outwards as he walks up the aisle.

The minister is announcing Hymn 146, to be sung to the tune of "Balerma". Henry steps on to the dais erected in one corner as an elevation for the choir and takes his chair, which is just across from mine. Then he makes a peculiar noise in his throat, clearing it for action, and his Adam's apple, which is much larger than Abraham Lincoln's, responds with evident relish. The organ sounds the opening bar, and we rise. The congregation rises also, a moment later. We are fortunate in having with us all the members of the choir. The most prominent, if one could sufficiently detach oneself, would be Lizzie Lavery, perched upon the organ stool. Lizzie is the organist. As we see her, she is an accomplished musician. She has taken ten quarters, and still is taking. In describing her appearance, as she sits on the stool, the word "round" should be used freely. For she is the very antithesis of thinness. To say that she is plump is merely to beat about the bush. But I do say it, and at that I leave something for the imagination. Imagine, therefore, Lizzie sitting upon the stool with an air of authority, and, during the brief pause that follows our rising, contemplating the minister and the congregation with every appearance of compassion. For, short and plump as she is, she can look over the top of the organ, which is of the low, square variety, and, be it remarked, is almost new. I have to confess that it is not a pipe organ, nor is it heavily stopped. But by being one octave narrower than some organs we have heard of, it does not occupy much space. It

is so simple also that Lizzie, short as she is and plump, by sitting forward on the stool, can pump it with the tips of her toes. Perhaps you have heard of organs that are pumped by hand. Ours is pumped by foot, and we are pleased. Because it has a sweet, although not sonorous, tone, and it is admirably constructed for droning a paraphrase or playing an anthem. To its lead we can sing with gusto "Old Hundredth", "Cole's Hill", or Psalm CXIX, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that it cost only eighty dollars and that the whole amount was raised at the Thanksgiving Awakening, except the twenty dollars given by old Mr. Johnston.

Mr. Johnston is with us this morning. As to voice, he is, if anything, neutral. He thinks he sings tenor, but if we had our way he would be singing on a higher plane, where it is to be hoped the greater volume of sound would dulcify the great falsity of his notes. Still, twenty dollars is next to nineteen, and at the best organs cost money. You will sympathize with us, we hope, and understand, should a discord reach you, that it is not to be charged against any other member of the choir, not even against Miss Pringle.

For Miss Pringle also is with us this morning. And although I do not wish to besmirch her with an aspersion, it must be confessed that on one or two important occasions—the Ladies' Aid Concert and the Harvest Home Festival, to be precise—she fell flat on some of the high notes. It was for me a valuable lesson. But we have forgiven Miss Pringle. We cannot forget her many estimable qualities. And, quite apart from that, she is now up in years, years that have been devoted to the choir, the church and the community. She lives alone, in the little house with the silver maple at the gate. She had a lover once, if any faith can be placed in long-forgotten gossip, and—can you believe it?—that lover was Henry Perkins.

Perhaps you already have observed, strange as it may seem, that Henry is with us this morning. Happily he is in good form, and if you listen with discrimination you may hear him go down to low C. See now how he is affecting ease, standing rather slouchily, with his toes pointing outwards and his ears hanging away, like plantain leaves. But if he is like the rest of us he is bracing himself to do the best he can, because we are conscious that all eyes are on us and all ears open. For we are about to sing "Balerma". But, before we begin, it is my privilege to tell you that the comely young woman from whom you have scarcely taken your gaze ever since she walked proudly to her place is Susie Taylor.

Susie is our only contralto, and even if for a personal reason, a reason that should concern nobody but Susie and myself, I have mentioned her last, she is by no stretch of imagination the least. I am proud that she is with us this morning. She completes our number, and as we stand, ready to take the first notes, a wave of confidence comes over us, over us individually, but perhaps over the organist more than anyone else. For Lizzie has great faith in her own ability, and she never appears to be discomfitted with the thought that she is about to perform in a triple capacity, playing the organ, pumping, and singing. Indeed, she sings with a fervour that would do justice to any camp-meeting. Perhaps it is due to the fact that she imagines herself the leader, which is not at all singular, because every one of us, deep down in heart, looks upon himself as leader, if not nominally at least actually. Young as you see me, you see me old enough to imagine myself in that capacity, and anyone who has sung in a church choir will sympathize with me in this confession. Because a choir never inflates as a whole. It inflates its individual members, so that whenever a soprano solo part is sung the ones who do not sing

it could do it much better than the one who does. Likewise as to the other solo parts. Nevertheless, as I look at it now, I can see that the palm surely goes to the organist. For in her triple capacity, Lizzie must be the leader. At any rating, you will be delighted to see the vim with which she will attack "The Waters of Babylon", which is to be our anthem this morning, and you must not miss the rapture of her expression, should it be our good fortune to burst into "Antioch". For she has a soul that moves to any concord of sweet sounds, and she actually becomes enthralled whenever the concord is sonorous, uplifting or profound. Witness with what evident relish she now plays the preluding bar. The minister has read the first stanza. Then, as the organ begins again, the choir leads the singing, and the congregation falls in, always a note or two behind. Miss Pringle is not singing with as clear enunciation as usual, because she still retains, between cheek and gum, part of a peppermint lozenge which she slyly slipped into her mouth the moment she sat down. The practice is not without precedent.

Peppermint, you will remark, is here as incense is elsewhere. We all are more or less addicted to it. Its aroma, which perhaps is rather bucolic than elegant, can be detected the moment you enter the church, and it will remain with you long after you have departed. For here and there in every row of seats you can see lips pursed in the act of extracting its flavour. Some use it to clear the throat, and all agree that it sweetens the breath, alleviates heartburn and prevents drowsiness.

Drowsiness is our common enemy. Old Mr. Johnston is its worst victim. He has tried extra strong Scotch mints, sassafras, and licorice, and lately he has been chewing coffee. As we sit down, having finished "Balerma", he surreptitiously

takes a bean from a waistcoat pocket and begins to munch it. The noise distresses Lizzie until she turns in her seat and scowls at the old man. By this time the minister is rising to announce the anthem, "The Waters of Babylon", and the congregation is assuming its most appreciative posture. Old Mrs. Pigeon has her hands, encased in black lace mitts, folded on her lap, and her face, with eyes closed, presents an expression of supreme resignation. Her daughter, Mary, who, joining the carpenter in wedlock, became Mrs. Butler, is obliged to leave because her baby, only three months old next Tuesday, has started to cry. All eyes except the grandmother's turn round and watch her to the door.

During these few moments Lizzie has played the introduction to "The Waters of Babylon", and we have risen as one man. We practised this anthem pretty thoroughly on Thursday night, and Miss Pringle and Susie tried the duet part over again on Saturday, with Mrs. Ted Smale playing the accompaniment on her melodeon. So that we embrace with equanimity this opportunity to produce it. Miss Pringle and I support the soprano part, and it is just a question whether our volume in the fortissimo passages, supplemented by Lizzie, who, as I have observed, sings at least with animation, is not too great for Henry's bass and Susie's 'alto, not of course overlooking Mr. Johnston's neutral interjection. I may be too critical, but it always has seemed to me that Henry's tone is raucous and that, therefore, the more we can submerge it the better. Naturally, in doing so, the tendency is to submerge also Susie's sweet, mellow tones, which is a pity. But in any case you will hear her at her best in the duet, for Miss Pringle has the goodness to modify her volume so that the blending of the two voices may be gratifying.

The duet, naturally enough, is the *pièce de resistance.* I have a secret ambition to sing it—some day—with Susie. For our voices blend perfectly, and the occasion, I feel sure, would supply a topic of conversation important enough to last a fortnight. Important enough, in any case, it is for our present consideration, but we must set it aside and finish the anthem, for Josiah Wilson and Ed. Bake are reaching down for the plates, ready to make the collection, a serious business, especially in these times, when money is tight and prices low. Therefore our voices come together again in the *tout ensemble,* and we finish with what I am bound to believe is a very effective climax.

And as we sit down, the two collectors rise. The plates pass down the side seats and up the middle. The smallest offering is a cent and the largest a quarter. Most of the well-to-do give five cents. Joe Martin fumbles for his usual amount, and, finding only a ten-cent piece, he places it on the plate and takes five cents off. The quarter is given by Hugh Holden, a prosperous bachelor farmer, who makes but little pretension in a religious way, but who lives, nevertheless, a godly life. In all the collection amounts to four dollars and thirty-one cents, and the two plates that contain it are placed very solemnly on the table beneath the pulpit.

The pulpit receives now its full measure of attention. As we fix our eyes upon it, we notice the minister in distress: he has forgotten the manuscript of his sermon. From a seat near the front he summons his only son, a lad of twelve years, and we can divine that he is telling the boy to run to the study, which is only a short distance away, and get the precious document. Meantime he himself engages in prayer. Miss Pringle, old Mr. Johnston, Henry Perkins and perhaps half of the congregation turn round and kneel with bowed heads. Lizzie and

Susie and I, who maybe are not quite so devout as the others, merely lean forward, looking at the floor. We have gathered, however, from motions that have been made, that it is the minister's purpose to pray until the boy arrives with the manuscript. Already he has gone through the usual routine and is fairly wallowing in pleas. He has called for blessings on the Queen, her ministers, plenipotentiaries, ambassadors, and all the Royal Family. He has included the Parliament at Ottawa, the Legislature at Toronto, and now he is coming nearer home. From where we sit, at our elevation, looking through our fingers, we can see the boy peeping in at the side door, afraid to enter while his father, who is intolerant of interruption, is still praying; while the father, thinking the son will come in with the document the moment he arrives, is afraid to stop, fearing he will not have any sermon to deliver. Thus we see the minister, waiting for the boy's return, praying away for anything and everything, and the boy waiting for his dad to stop, peeping in at the door. Miss Pringle, who never has been known to move during prayer, now actually turns her head to see whether there is any visible cause for this unusual outburst. Others, in the congregation, look around slyly, wondering what is the matter. At length the minister, obviously perturbed, ends the prayer with the plea that our pilgrimage here below may lead us all at the last to a better land up above. And as he sits down, wiping his brow, the boy enters and places the precious document in his hand. Apparently much relieved, he rises and announces the text of his sermon, which he reads from the thirty-third verse of the twelfth chapter of St. Luke: "Sell that ye have, and give alms".

Giving alms never has been practised by us to excess, but nevertheless we are pretty fair listeners, even if the effect

on us of such exhortations is, as the blacksmith has expressed it, "Like water off a duck's back, in one ear and out the other". I have to confess that I never enjoy sermons on giving, and on this occasion I fear my interest is wandering to the names of the tunes Lizzie is considering as she turns over the leaves of the book in front of her: "Ajalon", "Winchester", "Dennis", "Happy Day", "Coronation", "Sawley", "French", "Martyrdom", "Dunfermline", "St. Bernard", "Consolation"—all good old tunes sung by us from time to time with becoming fervour and devotion.

Devoted as I am to a proper appreciation of the service, especially the sermon, my attention is distracted by exterior things. For it is early autumn, and the window in front of me is open. Through it, from our elevation, I can see the village lying in Sabbath quietness, even somnolent, with apples mellowing on the ground and tomatoes ripening on garden fence and window sill. Presently old Charlie, the agnostic, rises from his accustomed snooze under the apple-trees and walks slowly into the house. Geordie McLaughlin is leaning over the sty, estimating the growth of his hog since last Sunday. He is not given to churchgoing; he prefers to read *The Huron Expositor* or the latest almanac. Now he is talking over the fence to Mrs. Butler, who was Mary Pigeon, and whose baby cried her out of church this morning. Their kitchen gardens adjoin each other, and it is interesting for them, as it should be interesting for everybody, to see the cucumbers forming, the citrons growing, the onions seeding, and the lettuce, all of it that hasn't yet gone to seed, still sending out crisp, curling leaves that make a wonderful background for slices of spring-cooled tomatoes and pickled beets. Sparrows chirp in the trees, and in the beaver meadow great flocks of blackbirds alight and whistle. In one of the back lanes Miss

Pringle's Jersey, Mrs. Johnston's brindle, and the miller's red heifer are cropping grass where it grows most succulent in the fence corners, and the doctor's bay mare is renewing its hoofs in the pasture lot down by the mill. A scene of homely quality. And as I behold it, framed by the open window and stretched out before me in the autumn sunlight, I turn perhaps with reluctance to the singing of the closing hymn, which after all must reveal an uncertain measure of artificiality. But I forget these things in the arch naïveté of Susie's smile, and I am reminded of life's belated beneficence as I see Henry Perkins, when all heads are supposed to be bowed during the pronouncement of the benediction, covertly squeezing Miss Pringle's hand, when, later on, I come suddenly upon these two erstwhile lovers talking confidentially, after long years of estrangement, yet rapt and unsuspecting, down by the garden gate, under the silver maple.

CHAPTER XVI

The Excursion

It was everyone's ambition then, as it is now, to go at least once during one's lifetime on an excursion to Niagara Falls. Nobody ever considered going in the ordinary way, paying the ordinary railway fare and staying at an ordinary hotel. Oh, no! Such an adventure never was a dangerous temptation, for, as the blacksmith put it, by the time you had paid your fare, eaten a meal or two, entered a few of the side-shows and taken a ride on the *Maid of the Mist,* even if you shouldn't go the length of a carriage drive down to the whirlpool, there wouldn't be much left of a ten-dollar bill for shooting-galleries, popcorn and souvenirs.

It is a souvenir, a sphere of glass with a picture of the Falls set in the centre, that recalls, as I look at it now, all the excitement and bustle and preparation that attended our first excursion. Crystal gazing it is, and yet, instead of looking into the future, as crystal-gazers are supposed to do, I look into the past, into that dim and distant other period when a trip of a hundred miles would furnish material for a year's conversation. It should not be inferred, however, that it was a period absolutely devoid of travel and expansion, for we had the Caledonian games at Seaforth, the Orange walk at Exeter, the bicycle meet at Mitchell and the startling announcement on all public horse-sheds that Barnum and Bailey were about to pitch tent at Stratford.

We went through Stratford, by the way, on the exeursion to the Falls. But we must not get there too soon. We have yet to paek our baskets and lie awake all night eonsidering whether we'll miss the train at Dublin, for there might be many a slip between the bed and the railway station.

The station was just five miles away. We—that is, mother —had made arrangements to get there in the baek seat of Henry Perkins's surrey. Mother used to say that nobody could be more obliging in a ease of that kind than Henry. Of eourse there were only two of us—mother and I. We left the baby with old Mrs. Smallicombe. Mrs. Smallicombe was the best of neighbours in a ease of that kind. Fortunately, she wasn't able to go herself, having sciatiea so bad she seareely was able to drag herself about the house. But she said the baby wouldn't bother her a bit. Why, bless you, she had reared six babies of her own, and every one of them a speeimen. So that as to that we felt fairly safe.

But we didn't feel quite so safe as to eollisions, falling between cars and knoeking our heads against semaphores. Goodness knows, we had enough warning. But if it had eome to the worst, we should have been among friends, beeause half the village was going, the fare being only a dollar and thirty eents for the round trip. Joe Ham said it was the ehanee of a lifetime. He himself, he said, really should have been hauling quarry stones, but he never had seen the Falls, and he had heard of men coming all the way aeross the oeean just to look at this one of the seven wonders of the world. He took his lumber wagon, and in it he found room for Jessie Littlejohn, Susie Butson, Tuffin's hired man and the music teacher. The farrier and his wife went in their top buggy, and the blaeksmith hiteheđ his horse to MeCormaek's old phaeton. Angus MeKittriek started out afoot, hoping to be pieked up on the way. Old Charlie, the agnostic, and Billy

Pringle borrowed Ferguson's pony and rode bareback, turn by turn.

It was, as one might construe, a representative portion of our community. And, as we mentioned at the outset, it included mother and me. We were at the carriage steps in front of the house when Henry drove up. The horse was rather skittish, but we managed to get the baskets well placed under the seat and ourselves equally well placed on top. Mrs. Perkins was thankful it wasn't raining. It was just her luck, she said, for it to rain pitchforks every time she ever went anywhere. That was the reason she wore her seersucker dress instead of her navy blue henrietta. Mother replied by saying that she believed in dressing to suit the occasion, and that really we hadn't put on anything. She had made up her mind, even if she hadn't slept a wink, not to fuss; and, one thing, she wasn't going to worry about the baby. It was quite a wrench for a mother to go away and leave her baby, just weaned, for a whole day. But she just couldn't miss this chance of seeing the Falls, with children at half fare.

Meantime Henry was letting out the lines. We passed the farrier at the fair grounds. We caught up to the blacksmith at the schoolhouse, and he gave us quite a race until we passed him just the other side of Murphy's bush. Henry's driver certainly was in great fettle, for we passed old Charlie and Billy Pringle almost before they had time to turn aside, and at the fourth concession, when we whizzed by, Joe Ham's team looked almost as if standing still. We passed everybody, and drew up at the station twenty minutes before the train was due to arrive.

All but Henry got out, and then we laid the baskets carefully on the platform. Henry drove the horse over to the tavern and put it up for the day. He had his own oats in a

bag under the front seat. Presently he rejoined us, and then we all stood in a row, apart from the score or more of other excursionists, to await the arrival of the train. First, however, Henry went inside and bought their tickets. Then mother went also and bought ours. Every little while someone would run on to the track and repeat, "She isn't in sight yet". The others soon began to arrive, and by the time everybody was on the platform we could see smoke rising over near Irishtown. Of course, the train was late, but the smoke was an indication of its imminence. Soon we could hear it puffing and the bell ringing and the grinding sound of the brakes taking hold. Then it rushed in upon us, spitting fire and belching smoke and thundering until, as Jessie Littlejohn said, we were all taken with convulsions. The engineer, in his tight black peak cap and blue smock, leaned out through the cab window, and the fireman, black and hot, pitched into the great maw behind the boiler stick after stick of cordwood from piles that lay upon the tender. Then the conductor stepped on to the platform, shouting, "All aboard", and the brakeman ran forward to open the switch.

We clambered aboard, baskets and all, and Henry undertook to find seats for us. He led the way. We made the perilous passage through the open space from one coach to another until we had gone through the several coaches of the train, crossed all the open spaces between the coaches, taken a drink from a tin cup at all the water tanks and until, hot and perhaps just a little dizzy, we at length leaned against a compartment stamped in gold letters "Ladies" and looked up at the kerosine shaking in the lamps that were fixed to the ceiling just above the bell rope hanging in loops down the middle of the aisle. For it was an old-time excursion on the old Grand Trunk, and we felt, somehow or other, that it was

only by intervention of the gods that we were suffered even to stand.

But standing betimes has its redeeming virtues, for we were handy to the water tank and other conveniences, and we could rest our weight mostly on one leg and then mostly on the other. Just all one could do when crowded into a seat was to sit there. To get up was to run the risk of losing the "space sufficient for one person". So that, standing, we could try to count the telegraph poles just as well as anybody else; we could see the shallow stream as we crossed it at Mitchell and appreciate better the jolts and tremors whenever the brakes were applied.

It was at Mitchell, I remember, that mother found a seat for me on somebody's lunch basket, and it was when we were moving out from Stratford, amidst much clanging and puffing and crunching, that she emitted her first real, deep-seated sigh. Then she threw her shawl across my lap, and I overheard her confess to Mrs. Perkins that she feared she had forgotten to tell Mrs. Smallicombe to be sure to put a little sugar in the baby's bottle. Mrs. Perkins assured her that the baby would not suffer one iota, and then I forgot all about everything else as a nice young man came along with a basket full of oranges, peaches, peanuts and prize packages. Someone handed me a peach and a prize package, and when I opened the package out popped a tin whistle and a gum drop. I ate the peach and the gum drop and fell asleep blowing the whistle.

And it was a whistle, the whistle of the engine, that roused me as we drew near to the Falls. Everybody was excited, for old Charlie, trying to beat his way, was put off somewhere along the line, and Susie Butson had fainted. All the water tanks had been drunk empty long ago, so they had had

to open a pop bottle and pour the frothing contents over Susie's face; and by the time Susie "came to" the train had stopped at the Falls.

The Falls, when the train stopped, we could hear rumbling, and of course there was tremendous excitement. Everybody was grabbing something to carry out, and mother whispered to Mrs. Perkins that the music teacher was sticking pretty close to Jessie Littlejohn. Mrs. Perkins said that it was understood they became engaged last choir practice night. Then I began to cry because I couldn't find my tin whistle, and, to make matters worse, mother discovered the fact that the seat of my linen breeches was aglow with raspberry jam. That misfortune, however, was overlooked in the great jam on the station platform. There we pushed and jostled and crushed lunch baskets, until at length our own village contingent gathered together and marched in a body right up to the edge of the Falls. We were not foolish enough to hire carriages, the walking being good; and, anyway, we had four solid hours before the train would start on the return trip.

Just what should we do first? That was the question. Henry remarked that it was easier to carry luncheon inside oneself than inside a basket; and soon, with that, we all were seated upon the grass eating fried egg sandwiches, raspberry tart and drinking lemonade. It amused us to feel upon our faces spray from the falling water, to hear the roar of it all, and to wonder what it would be like to go over. We passed an hour or more lunching, asking questions about the Falls and answering them in our own way. Then the music teacher, who liked to show off, pushed a big stone over the embankment. The stone stuck about half the way down to the water. A few days afterwards the storekeeper asked the teacher to tell him the height of the riverbank. "Well," said the teacher,

"I can give you an idea. The other day when we were there I started a stone rolling down the bank, and it hasn't reached the water yet."

Just before we finished lunching the *Maid of the Mist* steamed out from her moorings and entered upon her perilous course. That, to us, was the great sight of the day. We watched it in awe and wonderment. Jessie Littlejohn, who I daresay expressed the feeling of us all, said that she wouldn't risk a trip on that boat even if someone were to give her a ticket for nothing. And nothing could induce her to go down into the cave of the winds. But she was willing, as we all seemed to be, to walk across the International Bridge and see the red-haired mummy in the Museum.

It was the first mummy any of us ever had seen, and we passed many interested minutes looking at it. The farrier chuckled when he saw the red hair, and he was willing to bet a quarter that it was the carcass of one of those old cusses that had twenty wives. Then the farrier took me aside and spent the quarter on the round glass souvenir that started this reminiscence. As I said at the beginning, it is in front of me as I write. I pick it up, and it reminds me of our hurrying over to Goat Island.

We were on the Island when Henry announced that we had but half an hour until train time. With that we hurried back to the Canadian side, and both mother and Mrs. Perkins remarked that never before had they been so tired. But they were determined to be at the station in time to get seats for us all. As to that they succeeded, to our great satisfaction.

The train, of course, was late in starting. We were sure that the music teacher and Jessie Littlejohn would be left behind. What a scandal! But presently they appeared, arm in arm and looking very happy. Then we were all on hand,

all except Angus McKittrick and Tuffin's hired man. These two had been, as the blacksmith expressed it, about three sheets in the wind an hour earlier, and therefore their absence was not unexpected.

We passed and repassed the tin cup with water from the tank, which someone must have refilled, and soon we were all comfortably settled for the long trip homeward. But we were disturbed presently by a little girl who came through the car selling small baskets of fruit. The music teacher, perhaps superinduced by the success of the outing, offered one to Jessie. The young woman, with one of her sweetest smiles, accepted it. Then the teacher fumbled in his pocket for money to pay for it. The conductor was shouting "All aboard!" and the little girl was in terror of being carried off on the train.

"How much did you say it is?" asked the teacher, still fumbling.

"Fifty cents."

"Fifty cents! Whew!"

The music teacher then produced a five-dollar note, but the little girl hadn't enough money to make the change.

The train began to move and the teacher went on fumbling in his pockets.

"Mister," said the little girl, "can't you give me something? I must get off."

"If you can't make the change, I guess—"

But the teacher did not finish the sentence, for the little girl had to run—without the money and without the fruit.

The teacher laughed inordinately as he sat down beside Jessie. At the same time he confessed that he had the exact amount in his pocket all the time, but that he didn't believe in letting these people take advantage of tourists.

Jessie sat looking out through the window. The teacher, who, as all now seemed to understand, was betrothed to her, passed the basket of fruit, but she shook her head and kept on looking out through the window.

Then he offered some of the fruit to mother and Mrs. Perkins, but they both declined, saying they were too tired to even think of eating. I wondered why he didn't offer me any. I had an instinctive dislike for him, and it was intensified by my rather incomplete understanding of his treatment of the little girl. But when he failed to offer me some of the fruit, I felt convinced that the farrier was right in pronouncing him one of the "nearest" men he ever had known.

Everybody seemed almost to be ready to drop. But already we had dropped—right into the seats, and there we just sat, limp and exhausted. Susie Butson said that she never before had had such a gone feeling. She spread her handkerchief on her lap and let her arms fall on either side.

Presently the train moved, and we all braced up for a minute. Then the rumbling of the wheels put me to sleep. I must have slept most of the way homeward. But I remember waking once and looking up just in time to see the music teacher once more offering Jessie the fruit. But Jessie shook her head. And, although I fell asleep and did not see all, she must have kept right on shaking her head, for she never became anything more than just Jessie Littlejohn.

CHAPTER XVII

The Log House

IT is towards the evening of an autumn day forty years ago. An old man, the oldest in the village, a pioneer indeed, enters the little log house that snuggles behind the poplars half-way up the hill. Like the man, the house is rich in years; like him, also, it is battered and weatherbeaten. But these two, the dweller and the dwelling, present many points of picturesqueness. They began here together, when the great forest almost smothered them, before the place itself had even a name, and together they have settled down in serene and complacent age. Still they are not alone, for the room into which the man enters confines a low, peculiar, whirring, crooning sound. It is a sound not unfamiliar to the neighbour boy who is suffered to enter at will, lured thither by the sight of mink and muskrat swinging from a gun across the old man's shoulder. Yet in the gloom of the interior, where no object is sharply defined, the sound impresses the boy as something weird and uncanny. He knows, however, that it is a homely sound, and as his eyes become accustomed to the dim light, he distinguishes the bent form of an old woman spinning yarn. The woman, like the house and man, has stood against time and hard weather, but upon her face, even now, you can see shining the spirit of benevolence. She calls the boy to her side, and bids him watch her transfer the yarn from the spinner to the winder. Then she turns the smaller wheel slowly, and when it clicks, as she explains, it warns her that it has re-

volved forty times, which is one skein. A wooden wheel that speaks when it has done its work! And still we wonder at our latest inventions. But no marvel of this new century can take the place in that boyish imagination of the little wooden winding-wheel in the log house behind the poplars.

The old man has been visiting his traps. He throws the game into the woodshed, lays a couple of traps in a corner, and hangs the gun on pegs close to the ceiling. It is a bit chilly, he thinks, and the old woman, who is setting her wheels aside, enjoins him to start a fire. So he takes down from a rude shelf above a ruder fireplace two small articles. One looks like a piece of stone, the other like a piece of iron. And that, in fact, is what they are: the flint and steel of former days. He goes down upon his knees before the fender, sets out a few pieces of punk, above which he poises his hands, the flint in one, the steel in the other. There is a moment of hesitation, and then he strikes. The sound is sharp and brittle, as the flint and steel come together with a quick, sliding motion. Down through the gloom shoots a point of flame, but the punk does not ignite. He strikes again, but misses fire. A third time he tries, and then the boy sees a fine spiral of smoke rise above the punk. Bending closer, the old man blows his breath upon the spot that has ignited, and soon a flame appears. The flame increases and bites into the dead branches laid for its feasting. It roars and snaps, and these sounds of burning take the place of the spinning-wheel's weird wail. It has a cheery sound, and it sends forth a pleasant, flickering glow. But that is not enough, for the old woman takes down a candle from the dresser-head and lights it at the fire. She sets it in the centre of the table, and begins to lay out the things for supper. She invites the boy to sup

with them, but he must run across the road and ask permission.

It is quite dark outside now, and few things sound above the quiet of the village. But blackbirds chatter in the poplars, and someone is making a creaking noise with a pump. Very likely it is the shoemaker; he usually goes out at this hour to get water to soak leather in over night. His is one of the few pumps in the village; most of the people go to the common spring near the mill.

The boy obtains permission to remain for supper with the old couple. He comes rushing back from his own home, and just as he is crossing the road he notices in the dusk a small group standing a few yards away Curiosity causes him to stop and join them. The old mail-carrier has arrived, much later than usual, and as it promises to be a pitch black night he is borrowing a lantern from the teamster who lives in the house that used to be a tavern. The lantern is large and square, and on one side there is a door that opens. The boy sees the mail-carrier take off his dogskin mittens, hold the lantern up level with his face, open the door and set a candle within. Then the carpenter and the doctor each strike a match, and when the carpenter's fails, the doctor thrusts his forward and lights the candle.

The flame inside now casts a pleasant glow upon the faces of the group; and to this day, after forty years, the boy still visualizes each member—the mail carrier, with his hooked nose and large iron-rimmed spectacles; the teamster, with fiery red beard and little peaked cap; the carpenter in checked flannel shirt sleeves and hairy neck; the weaver, with gray Scotch beard, dour expression and high cheek-bones; and, above all, with mild congenial mien, the ample form of the doctor. The doctor is saying that the lantern will be useful

on so dark a night, with the roads bad under the fall rains. He advises the carrier to keep to the new road over the "mountain," and to look ahead for the bridge crossing the Sable. The bridge was all right when he crossed it this morning on the way from attending the school-master's wife on the Boundary, but the water had been rising and the logs were not overly secure. The teamster thought that the township ought to be hauled up for not building a new bridge, and he said with no uncertainty that if he should break through with a load of quarry he would sue for loss of time as well as of material.

The boy turns towards the log house. He can see the firelight flickering within and smell already the scones and potatoes frying over the coals. It is an appetizing smell, and he knows that they shall have tea and molasses also. But it is not for these things that he goes now into that homely abode; it is to hear the old man's tales of earlier days and see him skin the mink and muskrat. He looks on his host as on a great hunter, and likes the very sight of the steel traps, some of them with toothed jaws and above all, the huge beartrap. He fancies himself a hunter also, a great hunter, with a gun of his own and top boots and a case shielding a blade pointed like a dagger.

As they draw up to the table, the old man points to honey in the place of molasses. Real wild honey! What a treat! The boy can hardly wait until they come properly to it. But the old woman covers his plate with potatoes hot from the pan and spreads his scone so that the butter melts before his very eyes. Still, there is honey ahead, real wild honey. And the old man recounts how he obtained it. He had been setting traps in the beaver meadow, and in making for the bush beyond had crossed the summer-fallow where the thistles were

in bloom. There he observed a great number of bees, and he remembered how they all seemed to fly in one direction. In other words they made a bee-line towards a big hollow stump at the edge of the bush. Necessity had taught the old man that bees sometimes swarm in hollow trees; so that it was with the zest of the spoiler that he cut across the fallow ground and hastened to strike the stump with the butt of his gun. Then he put his ear against the bark, and heard, to his intense satisfaction, a buzzing chorus within.

To procure the honey intact demanded both courage and skill, qualities in which the old man was not lacking. And the result was a patent pailful of honey, which, when one comes to eating it, is as good as any tame honey ever produced. The boy realizes this fact, and he realizes also that it is an adventure not to be retold round the village. He chuckles to himself also over the big cupful of tea set in front of him, with cream from the brindle which he and the other children drove with the village herd home from the bush.

Supper over, the old man skins the mink and muskrat and stretches each hide on a shingle rounded at one end. Then he tacks them to a beam above the door, where they will remain until quite dry. These overhead beams support a remarkable variety of provisions drying there against the requirements of the oncoming winter. Strings of quartered apples, brown and shrivelled, stretch from beam to beam, and pieces of meat hang by cords tied to nails. Long strips of pumpkin provide a note of yellow, and a few ears of corn, like tubes of orange against the whitewashed logs, are retained there for spring planting.

The old woman, having washed the dishes and greased the good man's boots, gets out her knitting and joins the other two, who now are sitting before the fire. The old man is smok-

ing, and his socks, as he thrusts his feet towards the fire, send up a visible volume of steam. He remembers the time when life was not as comfortable as it is now, when they had no candles, even, and no floor but the bare earth. That was when the children were little, before some of them were born. But they grew up, all but one, and went their several ways, and oftentimes he wishes for the earthen floor and the windy chinks and his little ones again. One of the boys went to Michigan, another to Dakota, two to Manitoba and one to the devil; while the two girls married young and went to live hundreds of miles away.

But they were good old days, those early pioneer days, when forty miles to mill, on foot, with a bag of wheat, was a nice little change of air. There was no doctor then, my boy, in case of sickness, no mail-carrier, no tavern, no store, no church, no nothing. But settlers came, for the land was good —Scotch settlers to the south, English to the east and west, Irish to the north. A saw-mill started and they got planks for the floor and boards for the partition, the very same floor and partition that we now beheld. Hunting was not hunting in those days, for the game came right up to your very door. Deer passed by within gunshot every day, and bear and partridge, the wild turkey and wild pigeon, geese, ducks, and rabbits flourished on every hand.

Then came civilization, my boy, and school-teaching and church-going and what not. They had log houses everywhere, and good houses, too, as we see this one, the only one left. The old man would never forget the raising of his own house, this very house. There were no neighbours within miles in any direction so that they had to invite help from the Boundary. And it was a fatal raising, for poor Neil McAlpin was struck dead by a beam falling, and his young

widow, an old woman when her turn came, was laid to rest in the graveyard just the other day They had chosen the site for the house because there was an abundance of spring water at hand. A clearing of a hundred and fifty feet square was made so that if any tree should fall by wind or axe it could not harm the house. In the middle of this clearing, with stumps sticking up all round, the house was built. It was twenty-two feet long by eighteen wide, as anyone still could see. Count the logs, my boy, and you will see that they are eight below the beams and four above. The roof is of split timber supported on rafters of unhewn saplings. Of course, it is covered with shingles now, and there is an upstairs also, something that had never beeen thought of until the children began to grow and the saw-mill to supply lumber. It was easy enough work to hew and notch the logs and with oxen draw them into position. It was easy enough work, also, to lay the lower ones. But when it came to placing them in position above the reach of a man standing it was not so easy. To do that they used forked poles. One of the end poles broke, allowing the log to slide quickly to the ground. Poor Neil had not time to move aside. His gravestone, which was not put there until he had been in the ground twenty years, bears an inscription which says that he died performing his duty.

It was the duty of the pioneer settler to help his neighbour. Had it not been so there would have been no neighbourhood, no common settlement. And the exigencies of neighbourhood brought forth those fine social qualities that were the distinguishing features of early days in Upper Canada. The old man, as he smokes by the fire, has no idea that the time will come when self-respecting men will think of killing a hog and not sending pieces of the fresh meat to their neighbours. And

likewise as to beef and mutton. For fresh meat still is a delicacy—there is no butcher to call every day. Interdependence is the backbone of every community, and what affects one oftentimes affects all. The raising-bee, the quilting-bee, the sewing-bee, the paring-bee, the sawing-bee, the threshing-bee—all these festive occasions are customs of the day, yet the old man never dreams that they will not endure. For how can he foresee the things that will change the aspect of rural life? How can he predict the telephone, the electric railway, the motor-car, the gasoline engine? He is just an old pioneer, with flint and steel, candle and fireplace, muzzle loader, and home-made bullets. He looks to the past, not to the future, little reckoning that the boy at his side will become the man of to-morrow He has seen the flail give way to the threshing-machine driven by horses walking in a circle and a man standing in the middle wielding a long whip and emitting a longer whistle. He has seen the reaper supersede the scythe. He has seen oil actually burning in a lamp and shedding out an incredible light. He has seen wood burning in an iron stove set in the middle of the floor. He has heard of machines that knit, and of men riding on wheels propelled by themselves. As well might one think of flying. By many persons matches are used even in his time, and not long ago he heard a man say that you could get a gun that can be charged in a second. Of course, he doesn't believe that, nor does he see any sense in talking about being able to hear a person speaking a hundred miles away. And he would regard it as sheer nonsense were anyone to tell him that some day the boy at his side would be able to leave to posterity the sound of his voice.

Thus we see the pioneer of the log house forty years ago. He is the father of his country, for out from his house and

thousands of other log houses have gone forth young men and young women who are making the nation great. And the little boy who now rises from the fireplace, having listened to recollections of the past, looks forward into the future. He is of a later generation, and he must withdraw. And in good time, too, for the old woman is nodding over her knitting and the old man's pipe has gone out.

The boy walks quietly across the floor, opens the door and passes out. The village is in darkness except at the store, where the keeper is at this very moment putting up the shutters. He is a little later than usual, but, then, he is postmaster also, and the mail was behind time to-night. The boy scarcely heeds these things. He crosses the road and pauses on his own doorstep. A dog howls somewhere down the concession. The night is very dark. Yet the sky is lighter than the earth, and against it, silhouetted in black, the boy sees through the poplars the outlines of the log house. He sees the window, ruddy with the glow from fire and candle. He sees the old man rise, place his pipe on the shelf, and take down the Big Book. There is only one book in that house, a book thumb-marked and dog-eared, and even a boy might guess its name.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Blacksmith's Shop

HALF-WAY up the hill, in a sort of pocket of the incline, fixed there as if in league with nature, the blacksmith's shop, its doors wide open, fell prey to every passerby. It was a picturesque shop. Of stones the front and sides were composed, stones that seemed to grow up from the earth, one upon another, as if they were vital to it, just as if they drew into themselves those elements that impart colour and contour and those rare beauties that can be found only in stones that have felt beat of rain, heat of sun, cut of wind, test of time. And then the roof, which was covered in blotches by beautiful green moss, ran back and melted into the side of the hill, actually as the shop itself seemed to melt.

Sometimes one sees a fabrication such as that, a construction that does not seem to be merely perching upon earth, but that appears to have taken root, to have been absorbed by the earth, to have become an integral part of the earth structure. That, if we only had the wit to appreciate it, would reveal the basic principles of architecture, would prove to man, who raises edifices, not as the swallow glues or the oriole weaves, that no pleasure can be found in outraged nature, in warts and protuberances that offend but do not adorn.

And yet adornment, as we think of it and as we use it, had no place in the blacksmith's shop. Ornamentation there was, of a simple, unaffected character, ornamentation that involved the forge itself, with its rough stone chimney, its great black bellows, its heap of charcoal, its little seat back in the

crevice between chimney and wall, out of reach of the glowing coals. Then there were the cooling-tub, the rows of horseshoes, the kegs of nails, the work-bench with its array of tools, the tieing rings, the rods of iron, the sledge-hammers and the anvil.

The anvil, true to tradition, was for us the emblem of industry and usefulness. Its sounds of cling, clang, cling could be heard all the way from the graveyard to Bell's hill; and when the smith cut a bolt or fashioned a clevis, holding the big black tongs with one hand and wielding a heavy hammer with the other, while his apprentice brought the great sledge down with all its weight, the sounds that issued were as the heart-beats of the village. For the forge was indeed the heart, giving life and colour and the impulse to work. And while the sound gave that impulse the sight of the forge and indeed of the whole interior of the shop gave to the passers by an irresistible longing to loiter, to enter, to contribute to the conversation, to enjoy the gossip, to ruminate and speculate, to envy old Charlie his warm seat above the forge, in the crevice, a seat conceded to Charlie by the smith in recognition of long and faithful occupation. For Charlie was sitting there when the smith bought the shop, was the sole witness to the transaction, and for years afterwards he sat there most of the time, especially on chilly days, when he could not sun himself in the doorway or sit quietly under his own poplars. He loved to see iron take heat from the fire, to hear it thrust sizzling into the cooling-tub, to feel the heat from the coals running up his cottonades, to see steam rise in a cloud, swirl about for a moment, and then, joining smoke from the forge, slide quietly up the flue. He loved to sniff the smoky air, pungent of scorched hoofs, to

hear the flames purring and to see them emit sparks with every puff of the bellows.

"I believe in a man doing what he hires to do," he used to say. "I hired to load wheat for Henry Perkins and when the cattle got in the oats Henry called on me to drive them out."

"That's easier than pitching sheaves," the smith would reply, bringing his head round so that one could see the neat parting of his hair at the back. Small of stature, he nevertheless was tough and wiry.

"But I didn't hire to drive cattle," Charlie would reply, "and so I just asked for my pay."

"Glad of any excuse to quit work."

"Oh, I can work all right, but I'm not going to hire to do one thing and then find myself doing another. That's the way with a lot of people and religion: they preach one thing and practise another. They say this new preacher held forth the other Sunday on Jonah and the whale. Now, I daresay you listened to him with mouth and ears open, if you didn't fall asleep, and believed every word he told you about that old cuss living in the whale's belly for three days and then being cast upon shore. Was it a shark or a whale? The Bible says plainly enough that it was a whale. But some say the translation is wrong. They say in the original the only mention of the creature at all is that it was a big fish. I've heard it said there isn't a whale alive that could swallow a man. I wonder if a shark could swallow one. They say there are some powerful big sharks, with mouths wide enough to take in soap boxes, dead hogs and maybe once in a while a man or two. What do you think about it, Smithy—was it a whale or a shark or a hoax?"

The smith would go on fashioning the shoe according to his design, for this was the time when every blacksmith made his own horseshoes and when factory horseshoe nails were just beginning to come into general use.

"As I never saw a whale or a shark," the blacksmith would answer, "I can't be supposed to set up my opinion against the Bible. But I fail to see why it could not be one just as well as t'other. What difference does it make?"

"Just the difference between the truth and the untruth.

What I want to know is this: Can a man in his sober senses believe that tale about Jonah? If he can't, then he can't believe the Bible. What do you think about it, Smithy?"

"I certainly believe the Bible."

"Then you believe that a man could live all that time in a whale's belly? How would he breathe?"

"I suppose he'd get air every time the whale came to the surface."

"Yes, but whales take air into their lungs, just like any other animal. They don't take air into their stomachs."

At that the smith would strike the anvil two or three vigorous blows before replying.

"I suppose," he would say, "he must have stuck his head up every so often and gulped down enough air to last him until next time."

"Until Doomsday, you mean," Charlie would remark, rubbing his shins.

"Do you think," the smith would ask, "that a man can't live under water?"

"For how long?"

"Just as long as he likes."

"You mean just until the whale feels like throwing him up."

"There doesn't need to be a whale at all. Why, some of the natives of Africa can live under water for hours, maybe days."

The doctor would come in and stand looking at the smith fashioning the shoe.

"Do you believe that, doctor," Charlie would ask, "that a human being can live for hours under water?"

"No, not under ordinary circumstances," the doctor would reply. "He'd be dead in a few minutes."

"The circumstances I mean," the smith would interpose, "are ordinary. The native of Africa, when he wants to hide, lies on the bottom of a stream and sucks air in through a straw. You can't see him; he is under water; and yet he lives for hours."

"And I suppose, " Charlie would say, "that Jonah worked that trick with the whale."

"No, but he might have had a tube running from the whale to the top of the water."

"An excellent idea. I suppose there would be nothing to prevent him from having two tubes, one for air and the other for Scotch whisky."

"That seems feasible," the doctor would interject, chuckling; "for you must remember there were no temperance lodges in Jonah's time."

"No," Charlie would conclude, "nor revised versions. But I notice they weren't above having water turned into wine."

One day in the very heat of road gravelling Joe Ham drove his team into the shop and called for new shoes all round.

"Why, what's the matter, Joe?" asked the smith. "Going to enter a race?"

Joe spat on the floor and gave his bootleg a yank.

"No," he answered, "but I made a bargain with Henry Perkins that I'd do his statutory labour for him at two dollars for myself and team if he'd pay for putting the horses' feet in shape. So, you see, I want to get as much out of him as possible. Shoe 'em fresh all round."

"Just so," said the smith. "And am I to look to Henry or you for the pay?"

"To Henry; and if he doesn't pay I will."

And, true to form, Henry, on the ground that the horses' feet needed only a little touching up, refused to pay. The smith then said that if the whole amount was not settled, he wouldn't pay for the oats he had got from Henry for his own horse. Joe appeared to be quite disinterested until Henry refused to pay him for the statutory labour. Thereupon Joe became very angry and was going to hit Henry. But Henry kept away from the village and retaliated by impounding Joe's horses.

The blacksmith was poundkeeper, and as soon as he was informed of what had been done he went to Joe and demanded twenty cents as pound money. Joe refused to pay. His claim was that he had been letting his horses run loose every Sunday during the summer months for years, and it was a privilege he enjoyed now through force of custom. Old Charlie advised sending to Mitchell for the constable. And while they were discussing the situation, Joe went down to the pound, quietly let his horses out and drove them home. With that the smith threatened to send Joe a lawyer's letter, or, better still, have him hauled up for contempt of court. At length Henry offered to pay for the shoeing if the blacksmith would set for him a buggy tire free of charge. To that

the smith agreed, and Joe received his pay for the statutory labour.

"That's an awful shoe you're making, smithy," said Charlie one day; what horse can take that?"

"*Lord Haddow*," said the smith.

"What! You're going to shoe a stallion?"

"Jack says he's got sore feet and wants him shod all round."

"He'll never stand for it."

"If he won't we'll get you to whistle for him."

Whistling was Charlie's chief accomplishment. In earlier days, before the advent of the organ and the fiddle, Charlie used to whistle for the horses at all threshings and the dances that followed; and he was invited to raisings and paring-bees mostly because he could whistle and call off at the same time and drink more hard cider than any two men in the township. He loved to throw trills into "The Flowers of Edinburgh", to pipe a sort of shrill wail in "The Wind that Shook the Barley", and to beat time with his heels whenever he struck up the stirring measures of "Money Musk".

So that it was with hopes of success that the blacksmith, knowing well Charlie's charms as a whistler, undertook the shoeing of *Lord Haddow*. The beast itself was noble in some of the qualities that are attributed to animals of his flesh, but in strange quarters he was given to much snorting and stamping and sometimes to petty inconsiderations that should be beneath his class. These faults he began to display the very moment he was led prancing into the shop. He reared upon his hind legs until his head hit the beams above. One foot went through a plank of the floor, and he nearly broke a

leg. At length, however, he was made fast to a hitching-ring, and there he stood champing and frothing at the mouth.

The smith attempted to raise a front foot in order to fit the shoe and burn it into place. But he might as well have tried to shoe Pegasus. Then Charlie began to whistle. He started with "The Girl I left behind me", and to the very first bars, even before he began to interject accidentals and grace notes, *Lord Haddow's* ears bent forward and the whole demeanour of the beast was subdued if not rendered docile. Charlie whistled on, the horse stood still and listened, and the smith finished the job. As he did so he straightened up and groaned.

"Pretty good whistler, Charlie," he said.

Charlie didn't reply.

"I say, you're a pretty good whistler."

Still Charlie didn't reply.

The smith looked up and saw that the old man was asleep.

"He'll wake up," he said, "as soon as he hears me pulling the door shut. Then he'll groan, yawn, stretch himself, and say that he must be going, for the missis will have the scones in the oven and the tea steeping."

CHAPTER XIX

The Post-Office

THE place and importance of the post-office, except in large cities, diminishes year by year. Several causes appear. The newspaper undoubtedly was the first, but it never was so great a factor as it has been since the establishing of rural routes. Nor was the telegraph. The telegraph, indeed, never got close to the isolated village or the farm, but now the telephone, the greatest factor of all, has revolutionized the social life of the country districts and robbed the general store and the post-office of their erstwhile importance as centres of gossip and disseminators of news.

The post-office of forty years ago as it is recalled by at least one person had many characteristics that were common to most of the post-offices attached to general stores throughout rural Ontario. It had, for one thing, an imposing false front that extended up above the second story, a type of architecture that still obtains in equally ludicrous proportions in many new towns throughout the West. A verandah stood up as high as the second story, with a platform and railing on top, and on to it my aunt oftentimes used to step from the upper rooms when she saw a little lad toddling across the street to get a bull's eye or stick of taffy.

"What are you after now?" she would say, as she leaned over the railing and smiled down at the youngster with as sweet a smile as anyone could wish to see. And then some wonderfully tall man who happened to be sitting whittling

on the platform below, or perhaps it might have been my uncle from the store, would lift him up to my aunt, who would carry him inside and show him the goldfish and regale him with jelly cake and dandelion wine. Pity all little boys who haven't any aunt living above the post-office, above the store, just across the way!

The old mail-carrier used to drive up the hill about three-thirty in the afternoon of every lawful day. From the verandah it was a great sight to see him coming, his old gray nag tugging patiently against the incline and the dust gray wheels of the buggy following, round after round. But it was a greater sight to look down on him as he stopped in front and waited for someone to lift the mail-bag from the box at the back. For he was so old and so fat and so sottish that it must have been impossible for him to move from his seat except when he rolled out at the end of the journey in some remote part of the universe away back beyond the Boundary. He himself was always referring to the Boundary, for by it he timed and measured and weighed everything, and it was to it, and perhaps even a short distance into the strange realm beyond, that this same little boy hoped some day he might adventure.

Perhaps elsewhere, apart from fiction, there have been young mail-carriers, with young horses and new buggies, but all that I have ever known have been old, and everything about them has been old. They have been wooden-legged or palsied or slightly touched above the ears. All but one. Him I recall because he had a French name, wore long hair, was Père Goriot come to life again, and mostly because he came into the village late one night, oh, very late, so late that all little boys should have been in bed and fast asleep. I coaxed to be led out to see him, for he stood in the middle of the road, a lantern upraised

in his hand, a spot of light in all the circumambient darkness. Something had happened, I know not what, but as we drew closer I could see the anxious look on the faces of the few villagers who had waited for the mail. What attracted me most of all was the lantern, for it was much larger and different from the newer kind that my father used when called out on dark nights to attend the sick. It was very different from the electric flashlight in use to-day! The old mail-carrier held it up and opened one of its four windows. Then I got a glimpse within and saw fluttering there what must have been the flame from a stout tallow candle.

"I'll have to go back and look for it," he said, and he pinched the light with long, gnarled fingers.

I never knew what it was he went back to look for, and I never saw him again. Perhaps it was his youth. Perhaps it was the young wife whom my father told me he had brought there to languish and die. He had come from the land of Jacques Cartier, my father told me, and I knew he meant a country that was far away, even away beyond the Boundary.

Old Bill had a wooden leg, and I am not sure, as wood was cheap then, that he had not also a wooden head. He had at least a phenomenal capacity for conversation, and peculiar as it may seem to most persons, he loved to talk about himself. The things that he had seen and done seemed never to weary his otherwise lymphatic mind, and if he had a passenger going out to take the train the time would fly and he wouldn't notice its going. And most of all he loved to tell about what he had been. First of all, he hadn't always been a mail-carrier. Why, bless you, he had been before the mast for fifteen years, going round the Horn, back and forth twenty times, and flaunting it in almost every port between Plymouth and Singapore. He

had been a chemist in the Old Country for twenty years, had taught school in Torbay for ten years, had been a grave-digger, when out of luck, for five years, digging the grave that received the last mortal remains of the Duke of Wellington; had been a Methodist parson for twelve years, a jockey for nine years, an actor for eighteen years, playing mostly the roles of heavy villain and low comedian. He had kept a tavern in this country for five and twenty years, and never would have quit had the rheumatism not struck him so hard that he couldn't raise his arms as high as the bar. In all his many vicissitudes he must have served at least 114 years.

"You must be a pretty old man," someone would remark.

"I am," he would reply. "I'm just neat sixty." He had been just neat sixty for five years that we could count.

"But how did you lose your leg, Bill?"

This question always caused an embarrassing silence.

"How did it happen, Bill?"

After much baiting Bill would heave a deep sigh and answer almost inaudibly: "I never knew."

"It was in the Crimeer," he would proceed if permitted to do so, "and we wuz all fightin' like 'ell, when somethin' seemed to bust and blow up, and blow down and both right and left to once. . . . When they picked me up I wuz minus one leg and most o' my faculties. But I come to in about a fortnight. After that I quit the army and became a solicitor. It wan't no good, there bein' too many solicitin' after the war. And that's 'ow I come to come to Canady. Leastways, it wuz one o' the reasons."

Nobody ever quite knew the other reasons, mostly because Bill himself couldn't compose them to his own satisfaction. He was most likely to impart secrets when tight with liquor, a condition that was not uncommon to the man or to the day. But

perhaps there was some condonement. Carrying her Majesty's mails was not at best a very enlivening occupation, and for that reason, if not for one more human and personal, we might sympathize with the man who while waiting for the train to arrive preferred convivial company round the big box stove in the tavern to the chance acquaintance of the station platform. But whatever the reason, Bill oftentimes was visibly in his cups, and on one memorable occasion he fell asleep and permitted the horse to run the buggy into the ditch, break away from the shafts and leave the mail-carrier low and wet, mired by the roadside.

In course of time, as was natural, Bill awoke, and as he did so a man coming along on foot overheard him talking to himself.

"Be I Bill Bailey or bain't I?" he said. "If I be Bill Bailey, I've lost a horse; if I bain't, I've found a buggy."

On another and similar occasion Bill fell asleep but never woke again. They found him, lifeless, at the end of his journey—back near the Boundary.

Bill was succeeded by old Jim Hay, who was quite as old as Bill, much more helpless and amazingly less garrulous. Indeed, Jim Hay never was known to say anything. He just sat in the buggy, sticking out over the edge of the seat like a sack of wool and breathing and wheezing like a horse with the heaves. He never touched the mail-bag, but waited until someone eager for his letters would carry it into the post-office and then put it in its place again.

I loved to look down from the verandah above and watch old Jim jolt forward and then rebound when at length the buggy stopped abruptly in front of the store. I used to wonder who put the brass padlock on the mail-bag and what

was the meaning of the Queen's insignia. But I never knew, for nobody ever told me, that the post-office was an institution of her Most Gracious Majesty, whose birthday we celebrated by going fishing every twenty-fourth of May. But one way or another I came to know about the people who passed beneath the verandah, all loyal subjects of the Queen, even if unappreciative of her graciousness.

There was big Jim Hill, who always was expecting a letter from a brother who had gone over to Michigan; and little Billy Smith, who couldn't read anything he ever did get. But even if he couldn't read he liked to look at the writing and the little picture of the Queen's head stuck on the outside. Even if he couldn't read, he liked to hear about Joe Bake's fine field of wheat, Norden's fat cattle, and the latest additions to the population. It seemed to be incredible, and yet everybody knew it to be true, that Joe would consume a big basin of thick sour milk, without stopping for breath, every chance he got, and if it hadn't been for the mail-carrier he would have been the fattest man in all those parts. Norden was noted for his Holsteins, and indeed only for these estimable cattle our community would have received but scant notice outside itself.

Norden long had been regarded as an impeccable bachelor, and when at length he astonished the people by taking time from exporting cattle to import a wife the attention of the whole neighbourhood was turned from stock-raising to housekeeping. But shortly thereafter Norden fell ill of a fever. So ill indeed did he become that he supplied a new and sole topic of conversation. Some persons said that he must have contracted the disease when he was away getting married, and others blamed it on the swamp at the back of his farm. One or two ventured the opinion that it was a result of washing

in water from a stagnant cistern. At any rate he came out of it with impaired hearing but a thankful heart.

Joe Bake, too much occupied with sour cream and the contents of a well-stored pantry, had heard of the marriage but not of the fever. And when the two met at the post-office, one Saturday night when there was a good audience present, Joe attempted in his own way to congratulate the groom.

"Well, Norden," he began, "I hear you've gone and got married."

"I *was* pretty bad," Norden replied, "but, thank God, I'm better now."

From the verandah one afternoon we saw the mail-carrier approach, stop as abruptly as usual, jolt forward, rebound into the seat and then settle down like meal in a sack. Presently my uncle came out to get the mail-bag, but it was not there.

"Jim," he said, "where's the mail-bag?"

Jim looked straight in front for the space of fifteen seconds, then he reached for the whip. He turned the horse's head back towards the north, and, letting the whip descend, started off again, the old horse on the gallop, careering pellmell down the hill. The buggy rocked from one side to the other like a boat in the trough, and old Jim rocked with it. We saw him dash past the carpenter's, past the blacksmith's, past the cobbler's, past the mill, past the township hall, between the poplars, over the bridge with a booming sound, across the full stretch of the valley, and up the confronting hill. We saw him strike the long five-mile course that loomed ahead at the top, all the while striking the horse with the bitter end of his bitter lash. Not one word had he uttered, for Jim was a man of silence, as silent as a Trappist, and yet he knew how to make the unfortunate beast suffer for the failure of his own memory.

We saw him, still swaying from side to side, grow smaller and smaller as the road dwindled to a point at the horizon, and there at last he disappeared from our vision, absorbed by the enveloping landscape.

But at that same point, half an hour later, he reappeared, a speck coming out from the mist. He came as he had gone, swaying and lurching, staring straight ahead, but uttering never a word. His rage was too great for mere verbiage. Thus, having no outlet, it settled back within himself, and should be a warning to us all not to let the molehills of our every day grow into mountains. For it was Jim's last journey. Like old Bill, he was found, an inert mass, somewhere back near the Boundary. And the forgotten mail-bag lay at his feet.

They talked about old Jim for a while, but soon he became, as we all must become, a neglected memory. His place was taken by another old man who was afflicted with the dance of St. Vitus, and who indulged in a veritable passion for being late. I have sometimes thought that the people used to like it better when he came late: it gave them a reason for sitting around the store and talking about old times. Yankee Tom dearly loved to tell about the time he killed a wildcat with a frozen turnip back in Gormaly's bush. And Long Archie always waited with pardonable impatience to tell about the time he drove the sorrel mare from Tuckersmith home with rain falling in torrents a few feet behind him all the way but never catching him.

"Speakin' of wildcats," Angus McAlpin would begin, "makes me think of the time the bear broke up the threshing at Mike O'Hara's. Mike's son Pat, who went out to Manitoba, could get more work out of a set of horses than any other man in Americky. He swung as pretty a lash as you ever saw and

could whistle like a si-reen. Well, one day they were threshing at the old man's place, and, as it began to look like rain, 'long about noon time the old man was gettin' anxious. The dinner bell rang, Pat stopped whistling, the horses stopped, the machine stopped, and the men stopped.

"They had just got sot down at dinner when someone sighted a bear hiking for the bush across the back lot. Everybody jumped up and two or three of the men started after the bear, headed by Pat carrying an old musket. Mike didn't say nothin'. He just sat down on a block of wood outside and began to whittle. It looked more than ever like rain, and someone said casual like that there wasn't much chance of gettin' done that day, which made Mike whittle all the faster. They couldn't get started up again, with four men off, so they just had to stand there and wait. In a little while Mrs. O'Hara came to the door.

"'What's the matter?' she asked, lookin' at Mike.

"'Nothin'.'

"'Then why ain't yez threshin'?'

"'Pat, the divil, and Bill, the divil, and Martin, the divil, and Jerry, the divil, is takin' a holiday.'

"'Where hev they gone to?'

"'All gone to hell with the bear.'"

It didn't take much to remind the blacksmith of the time he shod Charlie Mason's blood stallion, away back in the days when they made horseshoes by hand and fashioned nails on the anvil.

"It must have been twenty—let me see. . . ." he would begin: "It was the year Betsy Jordan died."

"The year of the black frost," someone would remark.

"It's twenty years ago if it's a day," the blacksmith would insist, beginning all over again.

"Do you remember Charlie's two-wheeled cart with the spring seat?" another would ask, breaking in.

But before anyone could answer some unappreciative listener, some restless mortal who had no recollection of the late sixties, would interrupt with the inevitable question, Any mail for me?

CHAPTER XX

The General Store

LIKE all first-class general stores, ours had been painted white. Age, however, had imparted to its surface that rich, mellow quality that one might liken to old parchment or the skin of a Camembert cheese. A verandah of four posts, with a slanting roof, extended from side to side, and there was a false front that stretched upwards ten feet above the eaves. This front was ornamented with cornices and abutments to suggest a fortress, and there was enough plain space left upon which to impose these words:

ANGUS MACGREGOR
Importer and Dealer in
Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Boots and Shoes.

Angus came of remote Scottish stock, not so remote, however, as to attenuate effectively his fine instinct for barter. For his sense of the advantages of exchange always had been keen enough to enable him to draw a clear distinction between seller and buyer, and indeed this sense had not deserted him, even if, as in our day, he had reached the time in life when he was so bald as to be content to comb his hair with a towel.

Toweling you bought by the yard, unless you had a fancy for pink borders, with fringe. Angus sold both kinds, one for the roller attached to the clap-boarding of the kitchen, on the outside, near the rain barrel; the other, for placing on the toilet set in the spare room. But Angus, like everyone

else in his line of business in those days, professed to be an importer, and therefore he kept for sale much finer fabrics than toweling. He always kept, for instance, three or four lengths of tweed, three different qualities of cashmere, flannel, red and gray, a bolt of black crape for funerals, and, maybe, a few yards of silk.

Silk, one should recall, was in demand mostly for weddings and parties, and it seemed to be only natural, even if perhaps a little unfair, that anyone about to buy silk should drive over to Seaforth or Mitchell, where there was a greater assortment. Still, Angus claimed to allow as much for butter and eggs as you could get in the towns, and you had to consider the time lost in going and coming.

But we have gone inside the store and come forth again before we have become properly impressed with the outside. For there, hanging on either side of the door, just as you entered, were a lantern or two, a pair of top boots, a halter, a string of sleigh bells, and three or four dried codfish. On the floor of the verandah stood a keg of nails, a bag of turnip seed, a nest of patent pails, a coil of rope and a roll of barbed wire, while against the wall leaned an axe, a hoe, a washboard, a spade, two or three pitchforks, and a circle of carriage whips, all placed carefully so as not to obstruct the view of the windows.

This view retained in dry season and in wet its chief tone of familiarity. For strive as Angus might, he always fell back on the pyramids of soap bars, the tiers of canned salmon, the boxes of smoked herring, with one open, the several glass jars of candies, the pipes and tobacco, and the two lamps with blue bowls set on brass pedestals. These objects could be seen only as a result of careful scrutiny, for the panes of glass, which were small, even diminutive, compared with the

large sheets of plate glass seen elsewhere, had become coated with a film of dust that imparted, especially from a short distance off, a sense of uncertainty, if not a feeling of antiquity. But why dress and undress windows when people had to buy the goods sooner or later? And why clean windows when all Angus had to do was to put up the shutters every Saturday night—an insurance against desecration of the Sabbath and evidence of reverence of sacred things.

Sacred, on the other hand, is the memory of the store inside. For there was displayed, under glass, long sticks of candy at a cent a stick, or six for five, and bulls'-eyes that you could suck all the way to school and have enough left to keep Lizzie Jones going until first recess. Those were the days of the humbug, the peppermint drop, horehound, and the conversation lozenge. Angus kept a stock of these dainties always on hand, and even if he had a reputation for being parsimonious, he was known to slip a square of taffy into a little boy's hand and to permit the same little boy to sit in the empty hogshead in the back yard and to compete with blue-bottles for the morsels of sugar that remained in the crevices between the staves.

Brown sugar was staple in those days. Angus kept it handy, in a wooden bin just behind the counter. Beside it there were bins of raisins, currants, rice, oatmeal, sago and tapioca. Above the bins, on the shelves, reposed a row of tin boxes painted red or green and labelled "allspice", "pepper", "cinnamon", "lemon peel", and "mustard". It was Angus's privilege to remind his customers of these goods, and while Henry Perkins would be testing the "feel" of a barley fork, Angus would be asking Mrs. Perkins whether she needed any clothes pins, lamp globes, lamp wick, coal oil, vanilla extract, cloves, sardines, factory cotton, buttons, thread, or molasses.

Molasses, perhaps naturally enough, was esteemed by both young and old, but there was a eoneoetion called blaekstrap that was not fit for man or beast. We used to try it on porridge and pancakes and sometimes neat, but there was not any proper plaee for it exeept as a relief in baking or as a counteracting element in pork and beans.

Pork, one might mention casually, was not a luxury; indeed, everyone raised one's own hog, and it was a sad day when one could not buy, borrow or steal a side of bacon, a well-cured ham or a few feet for piekling. For example, it was a custom for old Charlie, whenever he dressed a hog, to send a piece of fresh meat to the doctor, to the blaeksmith, to Mrs. Littlejohn, and, perhaps, to the farrier. A doubtful eustom, a custom, as Hamlet would say, more honoured in the breach than in the observanee. Nevertheless it was not without merit. For the doctor raised a hog of his own, and whenever he killed, he sent, never failing, a pieee of fresh meat to Charlie, to the farrier, and, perhaps, to Mrs. Littlejohn.

Mrs. Littlejohn was very punetilious as to this custom. She in turn, that is, whenever her good man killed, sent some chops to the doetor, a kidney or two to Charlie, and, perhaps, a couple of feet to the farrier. So that throughout the season everyone, at least once in a while, had a taste of fresh meat.

Meat—*revenons à nos moutons*—was apart from Angus's line. For Angus stuck to things that were not domestic. If you wanted tea, we'll say, he could supply a blend that was called "dust" and that, even if it had not mueh effeet, certainly looked like mud. A dozen eggs bought half a pound, and with all its weakness it at least put a face on things. Old Charlie said one might just as well drink dishwater, and the doctor pronounced it harmless. One thing, it was not hard

on the nerves, and 'Liza Lumbers said she could drink three cupfuls and not feel it. But 'Liza was notorious as a tea-drinker, and therefore her experience should be accepted only with a grain of salt.

Salt, by the way, was one of Angus's important commodities. It was sold at a dollar a barrel, and Angus defied any man, even the Grange, to sell it for less and live. The Grange accepted the challenge, sold it at ninety cents, and died within the year. It was a great triumph for Angus, as great, almost, as his luck in getting the post-office.

The post-office, it is scarcely necessary to record, was restricted to a narrow section located at the rear and almost hidden from view by top boots, oil cans and bucksaws hanging from the ceiling. Its equipment consisted of a wicket, a drawer for money and stamps, a book for recording the delivery of infrequent registered mail, and as many pigeon-holes as there are letters in our alphabet. Some of the pigeon-holes never were used, because there was not any person thereabouts with a name like Zorn, Quantz, or Xavier. In these unclaimed holes Angus kept all doubtful or interesting matter until he could find time to steam and read it.

Steaming and reading was one of the natural perquisities of the post-office. But it was everyone's privilege, if not indeed duty, to examine the backs of one's letters in the hope of discovering an incriminating finger-mark or some other doubtful disfigurement. Of course, Angus, like all rural postmasters, carried himself as if above suspicion, but there were some of us who held that if he did not possess inside information as to local affairs he at least exercised uncanny perspicacity. Mrs. Simpkins, if you please, declared, whenever even slightly provoked, that the day after she received notice that her mortgage was about to be foreclosed every-

body in the neighbourhood knew about it. And that in face of the fact that she was well able to pay it all off at once and be done with it. That was hard on Mrs. Simpkins. And Angus got the blame. But it wasn't half as hard on her as the news was on 'Liza Lumbers that she had advertised for a husband. Nobody seemed to know just how this titbit leaked out. 'Liza herself stuck up for Angus, perhaps because she was 'cute enough to see that if she accused him it would show that she had advertised. At all events, it wasn't long before a stranger appeared in the village, decent enough looking for a man of his years, and, as it appeared, he had plenty of money. And that was the last we saw of 'Liza.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Billy Pringle as soon as the news had been imparted by old Charlie, who was sitting against one of the store's verandah uprights, chewing slippery elm. "Gosh! I hadn't heard. 'Pears to me it pays to advertise. I guess I'll tie up."

He tied his horses to the hitching-post.

"All depends on what you have to sell," said Si Butson. "Now if you wuz to advertise that there nigh critter o' yourn for sale or to give away, hanging the ad. on her collar bone, I bet you wouldn't get a bid."

"Haw, haw!" exploded Joe, the teamster. "That's a good one. What you say, Bill?"

"I say you can't buy that mare at no price. She ain't for sale."

"What's she for, then?" asked Si.

"For lookin' at, I guess," said old Charlie.

"Yes, and a dang good pieter she makes, too," said Billy, "beside the finest colt in Hibbert."

"Has she foaled?" asked Si.

"Yes, and what's more, she can draw more'n any horse you've got."

Si stepped off the verandah and patted the mare on the shoulder.

"She's pretty good to draw, is she?" he asked.

"Pretty good," said Billy.

Joe stepped off, following Si, to get a better view.

"Why," he exclaimed, "she can draw all right, you bet, she's drawing her breath."

"You don't say so," said old Charlie, rising from the edge of the verandah, with a groan, and moving slowly over to where Si and Joe stood.

Billy picked up a fork and made a motion with it as if pitching hay into a mow. Then he leaned against the farthest upright, bit off a morsel of tobacco, and regarded with an amused smile the three men in front of him. Si was standing off a few feet looking at the mare; Joe was examining her teeth, and old Charlie was feeling her spavins.

"Yes," said Billy leisurely, "and she's drawing more'n her breath."

"You don't say so," said Si. "Can't see it."

"Well," said Billy, "if you wuz standing where I am you'd see that she's drawing the attention of the three damnedest knowalls between here and Halifax."

Halifax was a word that denoted distance. It was familiar also because we reckoned sometimes by Halifax currency and the York shilling. Angus, for instance, never told you that a lamp globe would cost twenty-five cents. That sounded too much. He always said it would cost a shilling.

"What? Twenty-five cents for a lamp glass!" you would reply.

"Ah!" Angus would rejoin, "You must remember this is real flint, almost unbreakable—only a shilling."

And so it went, from door knobs to soothing syrup. For Angus kept, you will recall, a small store of drugs, mostly patent medicines, and these he sold in direct competition with the doctor. Salts and senna, of course, were in constant demand, and there was more or less trade in hair oil, pain-killer, sarsaparilla, gentian root, blood bitters, sassafras, liniments, astringents, and condition powders. So that you could get a remedy for the common ailments of both man or beast; and, what was to some of us of more importance, you could get credit, even if Angus, scrupulous as he professed to be, was charged repeatedly with overcharging. That is, he would make two entries for one purchase. And it was whispered about, especially by those of us who were in debt, that his conscience permitted him to enter in the books a charge for something you had not bought. Mrs. Cameron was indiscreet enough to tell here and there that he had billed her for a gallon of kerosine, a commodity she always bought by the barrel. And when this statement in the course of its percolation reached Angus, he threw up his hands, denounced the day of his birth and threatened to send the woman a lawyer's letter. But letters from such a source were scarce in those days, for there was not one lawyer within ten miles, and there were other ways to satisfaction.

One way was forgetfulness. That, it seemed, was Angus's way. For even if he threatened much, he was long-suffering, and without malice. He served his generation from morning until the setting of the sun. And when night fell, still was he there. He trimmed his lamps and set them in their brackets in the windows; and inside, above the counters, he set them so high that they made smoky spots on the ceiling. But what

was that to Angus, the very same Angus who had all he could do to serve us day in and day out, night after night? From Monday until Saturday he was there. And then, on the last day of every week, on the stroke of midnight, he would put up the shutters, lock the door and blow out the lights. That was the last we could see of him until Sunday morning, when in fine weather he would walk out into the backyard behind the store, sit under the grape arbour and read the weekly newspaper. It was cool and quiet out there. And after a while we could see, ascending like incense, through the lattice and through the leaves, the thin, blue smoke of a cigar.

CHAPTER XXI

The Doctor

THE stork had been hovering over the village, and in response to prevailing rumours there was much conjecture as to where it would alight first. Old Mrs. Finlayson (rest her ashes!), who had been midwife to the community ever since babies began to come our way, expressed the fear that she would be flitting about like a devil's darning-needle, with all three cases on her hands at once. She was one of those aged persons who always have been full of years and who go on living, decade after decade, and seeming never to grow older. She had heard that a young doctor was about to settle in the village, and she observed that it would be a good time for him to start, for there was enough business in sight to keep him in practice for a whole month. After that, if he had luck, there would be an outbreak of measles, a ravage of shingles or a visitation of the itch. In any event, somebody would be sure to want a tooth extracted, a broken arm reset or a bottle of bitters to be used against failing appetite.

Appetite, happily, was a manifestation which with most of us failed not. Indeed, if we needed the doctor at all it was to alleviate the results of over-eating. We had colds, as a matter of course, and attacks of heartburn; Miss Pringle had chronic headache, Mrs. Jackson a constant pain in her side, and old Bill Pearson had rheumatism so bad he couldn't sit still in church.

In church, they used to say, it was that most of them first saw the doctor. Word had been passed round, stirring their

curiosity, that he was to be there, otherwise none but the ever-faithful would have turned out on the coldest and stormiest night of a cold and stormy winter. And when they saw him, they used to say, they saw the tallest man in the congregation; and when he walked down the aisle he at once established himself as a man of superior bearing, superior personality, and superior attainment. He was large in proportion to his height, and his wavy brown hair lay back thick from a high forehead. He had mild blue eyes, firm features and a countenance that, even if grave, denoted intellectuality, good judgment, and kindliness. It was whispered about that he was a bachelor and that he was going to board for a while with Dougald MacLaren, a farmer whom Joe Morris in harvest time used to divert from his trade by paying him for pitching sheaves the astounding wage of forty dollars a month and everything found.

But now the time of year was the very opposite from the harvest. It was indeed the dead of winter. A great mantle of snow lay upon the ground, and still it was snowing. All the sidewalks were blocked, and it was against great odds that the farmers had come to worship. Some had come in bodsleighs, some on horseback and some afoot. And while it was possible for them to come, it looked as if it would be impossible for them to return. For a great wind had arisen and the snow was forming into immense drifts, drifts that here and there blocked the highway and choked the main village street. Against that wind and through those drifts no span of horses could venture, no man afoot could wend his way.

But there was one man who had to make a way. That man was the miller. He told afterwards how he came down the

slope from his house, leaving his wife with the pains on her and making a way through the snow, which was knee deep above the fence, upon the top of which he walked with dire uncertainty. He went down by the side of the mill, crossed over on the edge of Tufford's field, and by sheer perseverance reached the corner of the blacksmith's shop. From that point he floundered out into the middle of the street and by turning his back to the wind managed to reach the church door. Jessie Littlejohn used to tell us that when he turned the knob and walked in she thought sure it was a ghost. For the miller was whiter than the flour he ground between the upper and the nether stones. He stood for a moment panting, and then, right in the middle of the sermon and much to everyone's consternation, he walked up the aisle, laid a hand upon the doctor's shoulder and whispered in his ear. Everyone knew the portent of that whisper.

The doctor bent down for his cap before standing up to put on his buffalo coat. Then he and the miller together walked down the aisle and out into the storm. Their exit almost broke up the service, for it was impossible that anyone could follow the sermon while thoughts of the miller's young wife rushed in, while in fancy appeared the picture of the two men struggling through the snow. And there had been also the premonition that the miller's wife would not pull through. She was so frail and so young! And nobody but the doctor ever knew how she fought for her life, how she tried to rally her strength when she heard the first faint cry of her little one.

"I came a day too late," said the doctor, and next morning there was crape on the door.

The doctor took for his office the front room of the house where he boarded. It was a small office, but quite large enough

for the extent of his practice. The equipment was not great. For the peculiar requirements of his profession he had a leather case of lances and small knives, a galvanic battery, several forceps, a roll or two of sticking plaster, some shingles for splints, a long flat knife and a walnut board for mixing salve and rolling pills, a mortar and pestle, a tiny scale, and several rows of bottles and jars that contained such drugs and febrifuges as iodine, laudanum, paregoric, quinine, tincture of arnica, pepsin, strychnin, santonin, camphor, tincture of gentian, tincture of iron, Turkish rhubarb, Epsom salts, calomel, sweet nitre, ammonia, saltpetre, sulphur, lard, and that abominably distasteful cathartic jalap.

The lard was home rendered, like the tincture of gentian, which always was held in a "gem" jar, with the dark brown roots visible in the liquid. And it had an important place in the scheme of economy, for lard was the basic element in all the salves and ointment that the doctor had concocted and then, according to demand, mixed with his own hands.

We are treating of a time, it should be understood, that preceded the introduction of the sugar-coated pill and the immense promulgation of the patent panacea. It was not convenient then to buy remedies ready-made, and in remote districts like ours even the doctor was regarded as a luxury. We took our cathartics neat and were cured by sheer force of the nausea that ensued. Who could forget those dark brown pills that the doctor used to roll by hand, having first kneaded the paste on his slab of walnut, using that flat, flexible blade of steel? They even smelt to heaven. Ugh! And then the salves and ointments that he used to concoct! The jar of lard would come down, and then the sulphur, and the calomel and the zinc. We could have ringworm, and he

would cure us. We could have eczema, and he would give relief. We could have the itch, a very common complaint in our day, but not anathema, and he could cure us offhand. And when it came to resetting fractured bones, his touch was as discerning as the X-ray. Shingles he used for splints, cotton batting for pads, and for binding he tore strips from a discarded shirt or the housewife's apron. Water with a few drops of carbolic acid was the only wash that was used in dressing, and it served its purpose very well, for we found great satisfaction in the sight of a wound festering, because we knew then that it was on the highway towards recovery. Of course, there were some cases where in time mortification set in, but such cases, due to neglect and bad living, were hopeless from the beginning.

But to begin again, we must go back to the doctor. It must not be supposed that he was one of those young upstarts who called inflammation appendicitis and didn't know the difference and who wouldn't give countenance to the good old practice of bleeding. For everybody knew that the tavernkeeper would have been dead long ago if the doctor hadn't taken half a cup of blood from him every month. And no doubt many will remember George Norris. George endured two strokes of paralysis, and when they used to put him in a rocking chair and carry him out onto the verandah, where he used to sit in the sun, the neighbours would drop in to sympathize with him and to remark how terrible it was that the third stroke always should prove fatal. For George's benefit they would cite cases where the third stroke, following close on the second, had ended in death; and George, as if defending himself in particular and the affliction of paralysis in general, would reply by quoting the doctor's assertion that

it was by no calculation certain that he would die of a third stroke. And the doctor was right. For George, having caught cold while sitting on the verandah, died within the week of inflammation of the lungs.

Inflammation was as common then as influenza is now. A case of it brought the doctor into close contact with the reeve's family, with the important result that, having cured the reeve's wife, he couldn't cure himself except by marrying the reeve's only daughter. And then when they tore down the old log tavern he built a frame house on the spot where it had stood. Hard by he built a duplex stable and barn, with enough room for a horse, a cow, a buggy, a cutter, an oat-bin and several tons of hay. The parcel of land upon which these buildings stood was in extent at least one-fifth of an acre, which was well occupied by northern spy apple-trees, a hencoop and a pigsty. His office was in the corner of the house nearest the stable door. It contained a lounge, a counter, several chairs and a box stove, beside which on winter evenings several neighbours used to love to sit and relate encounters they had had with wildcats in Boyle's bush and black bears in the tamarac swamp. Once in a while the Frenchman, on his way home half drunk from Dublin, would open a tin of oysters, an edible that seemed to be highly relished if mixed with beer and McCormick's biscuits.

Just off the office there was a "consulting-room". It was furnished with a bed, a washstand and a lift-lid desk that always gave out a pungent odour of pears. That is where the doctor slept, even long after his wife, who had borne for him three children, had been carried thence through the front door. And that is where, in case of sickness, anyone hurrying late at night, would find him. All one had to do,

having come so far, was to tap on the window. Then the doctor would say, "Yes, yes; I'll be there", groan a little, jump up, slip into his trousers, go forward, open the door, ask a few questions, and then come back and finish dressing.

Dressing in such circumstances, with the prospect of a five-mile drive, was not unpleasant on fine summer nights with the moon high in heaven and clover smelling sweet under the dew. But on cold, stormy winter nights, with the banked fire low in the stove and frost coating the panes! Ugh! I can hear him even now. "Oh, dear, dear me!" he would say. "Who can it be?" And then he would spring out from the warm blankets and shiver into his clothes. "Oh, dear, dear me!"

"I asked her if she couldn't thole over till morning," the man at the door would say, by way of apology, and then he would remark that there were bad drifts on the mountain and that it was necessary to take to the fields just this side of Hogarth's bridge. And with that he would hurry away, for his sick wife would be tholing it all alone until his return.

And then the doctor, with his lantern lit, would sally forth into the storm. The old horse, hearing him, would whicker, knowing well what it meant. But a gust of wind rushing through between house and stable would blow the light out. Then the doctor would reenter the office and relight it. Again it would be blown out. Again he would relight it. And again it would be blown out. Then we would hear a bang, with the noise of broken glass, and in the morning we would find the lantern, flattened and useless, lying beside the stable door.

No, it was not too bad on fine summer nights, with frogs singing in all low places and fireflys lighting the gloom. But

when the doctor had to wade knee deep through spring freshets, weighting the cutter down with fence rails, when the horse would stand and shiver and refuse to go on because the culvert in front of him had been washed away, when the temperature would be twenty below zero, and a blizzard blowing, when rain and sleet cut into the face on late fall nights, when diphtheria would attack one household and scarlet fever another, when Barbara Brown would have inflammation, and Mrs. Burton pleurisy, when Jim Feeney would go out of his head and cut his throat, when a limb would fall on Billy Johnson and fracture his skull, when the mowing machine would run over little Johnnie Jones, when the new tavernkeeper would break out in delirium tremens, when big Angus would be raging with liquor and about to throw the sewing-machine through the window, when Ferguson's baby would swallow a button, when Jimmy Norris would drop dead in the field—when these things happened the doctor's job was by no reckoning all beer and skittles. And he had as well to be peacemaker where there was domestic infelicity and general arbiter in petty disputes that were too far removed from any court of law. At fairs and debates he was a judge and at public meetings the chairman.

But for all these services the doctor got his reward. For pulling a tooth he would charge twenty-five cents. For an ordinary consultation, with a bottle of medicine or a box of pills, he would mark down one dollar. For a case of confinement, with all attendance, his fee was five dollars if he thought he couldn't get ten. Many, many times he forgot to make any charge at all. Very often his reward came in everyday commodities of exchange. From the storekeeper he got groceries and many of the odds and ends that ordinarily

are required in simple households. Then, too, from others he got turkeys for Christmas, geese for New Year's Day, eggs and butter galore, milk when his cow ran dry, and wood in great piles that almost filled his yard. He got maple syrup and potatoes, turnips and mangold wurtzels, cheese and cider, chicken feed, chop stuff and flour, horseshoes and buggy tires, dressed hogs and quarters of beef. In barns of the countryside he had enough hay and oats to supply a regiment of cavalry.

All these things came to him whether he needed them or not. But he got insignificantly little else. For it was a time when everybody seemed to be long of commodities and short of actual cash. If the cobbler mended our shoes he required in exchange a gargle or a liniment. If the farrier gave old Jack a dose for the botts, a fair exchange was a box of pills for the mother-in-law. It always was supposed that at the end of the year there would be a reckoning. But in most instances it was the reckoning that availeth nothing. For how, as old Charlie used to express it, can you take blood out of a stone? If the doctor owed the blacksmith thirty dollars and the blacksmith owed the doctor only twenty, how could the accounts be balanced if the doctor had nothing but pills, drugs and professional skill? Likewise if the minister owed the doctor forty dollars and had spent all his stipend, how could he pay the debt if he had nothing to offer but stale sermons and the authority to officiate at weddings and funerals? There, then, was a ludicrous progress of affairs. But we all seemed to live, somehow or other, and a few of us, notwithstanding the doctor's skill, seemed to die. For dying, to pronounce a platitude, is the common and the crowning achievement of mankind. It therefor should not astonish

or distress anyone if we conclude this chronicle by recording the death of the doctor. Yes, without asking leave or giving notice, the very man who for almost half a century had been trying to keep the grim reaper away from others, at last, himself, maybe in an unguarded moment, felt the keen edge of the blade. It was during the epidemic of the flu, after he had fought the scourge, perhaps only half-armed, day after day, night after night, like many another doctor, with the shrouds full. Upon his tombstone we should engrave these words:

"He saved others; himself he did not save."

CHAPTER XXII

Christopher Howard

CHRISTOPHER HOWARD was a Devonshireman who settled on a farm in Ontario fifty years ago. God had not thought of him as a farmer, but fate cast him there, and there he remained. He is remembered now because of the paradoxical nature that permitted him to display the very essence of heartiness and goodwill towards everyone outside his own home and the very essence of irritability within. On one hand he had the spirit of geniality; on the other, the spirit of animosity. For he had primitive man's idea of the proper fitness of things. A wife, for instance, was an inferior member of the household, a creature convenient whenever anything had to be fetched or carried; indeed, as one who catered to his comfort and well-being. And his comfort and well-being demanded certain things on certain occasions. For one thing, he demanded apple-butter for breakfast summer and winter, with pancakes and bacon. At dinner, the mid-day meal, he insisted on having with his meat a huge slice of cheese, whose surface he always covered with mustard. At this meal also he called for a pitcher of hard cider, drawn from the spring-house in summer and heated with a red-hot iron in winter.

"What! No baked apples!" he would observe, shouting at his wife. "Fetch 'em in! That's your duty."

And red-hot, to be sure, was Christopher Howard whenever he revealed his real personality.

But on those memorable occasions when two little boys came his way, he did not even try to conceal the fact that

he possessed as well all the mirthful qualities of Santa Claus and King Cole combined. For he just went on in his own assumed manner, shaking for all the world like a real bowlful of jelly, puffing out his whiskers, getting red in the face with merriment, coughing and hiccoughing with nervous excitement, and twinkling his eyes like two stars on a winter's night.

Winter, as one thinks of it, is his proper background. For he never appeared in the village except during the cold months, and he always wore a mink cap, with earlugs flapping loose, a great shaggy coat of buffalo hide, gauntlets of brown calf skin and top boots of soft kip, with high heels and patent leather fronts. And although his farm adjoined the village and the stones of his house showed gray beyond the beaver meadow, through the apple orchard, only half a mile distant, he never came afoot, but always drove a black blood stallion hitched to a red cutter and engirdled by a chime of bells that even with their warning notes gave out a measure of delight. And as he drew up at the post-office, threw the buffalo robe over the dashboard and stepped out with the reins still in his hands, he looked like a picture from a fairy book. And if he actually was not Santa Claus or King Cole or some wild rover of seas, he must have descended from his own illustrious namesake. For Christopher Howard, notwithstanding his pittance of opportunity, lived in a world of colour and action and romance. He was not just the average old countryman determined to go a-farming. Not Christopher Howard. For he had an imagination that took him all over the world, serving him much better than his gouty feet, and making it possible for him to work out his own salvation even in the face of an arrogant disposition, a slender education and a squeamish community. And although he moved amongst

settlers from Scotland, Ireland and his own England, and listened to several differing accents, he still retained his broad Devonshire twang, uttering words which in strange ears sounded as if begotten of a foreign tongue.

"Wa'ar be gwine?" he would ask if the village boys happened to wander into his orchard in harvest apple time. "Ah doan min' a vew apples, but doan sgin the bark off wi' they bare feet o' yourn."

And whenever anyone inquired as to the health of Mrs. Howard he always answered, "'Er's a little better'n 'er 'ath abin, I tzank 'ee."

Mrs. Howard was a woman of conspicuous resignation. She was resigned to everything, even to one of her husband's proudest possessions—a Peruvian parrot. This brilliant bird Christopher had taught to pronounce profane words, for no other reason than to amuse himself and harrow the tender feelings of his pious wife. In the midst of grace at table (in this respect Christopher had not departed from the ways of his fathers) the parrot oftentimes would exclaim, to Christopher's huge delight, "Oh, 'ell! damn 'er eyes, Polly wants a cracker." To a woman of Mrs. Howard's natural piety and sensitiveness, the effect of these exclamations was relieved only by her attendance at church and other forms of worship.

Worship of an unseen deity did not appeal to Christopher. Perhaps for that reason he never was seen in church. Nor did he ever accompany his wife anywhere in public. On the other hand, he never was known to enter the tavern or even to darken the doorway of a neighbour's house. He had keen, social tendencies, but he confined every social act to the village street and his own fireside, where Mrs. Howard enacted the role of feminine inferiority.

Inferior in Christopher's mind Mrs. Howard was, because she had come from Cornwall. Her genealogy also was the cause of his contemptuous attitude towards her. He nicknamed her "Cornwall", and on all important occasions, such as threshings, logging-bees or apple-picking time, it was Cornwall this and Cornwall that, with as sardonic a flavour as anyone could produce. But she bore up under it all with marvellous resignation, thanking the Lord every Thursday night at prayer-meeting for His great mercy and setting an example to any who on slighter provocation might groan or complain or appear to be ungrateful.

Gratefulness was Mrs. Howard's conspicuous virtue. She was so grateful it was hard for her not to keep on talking about it. She had many things to be thankful for, even if she were ailing at times and had a constant pain in her side. For the Lord was good. But the pain continued.

"One of these days," said the doctor to Christopher, "she will just topple over."

He was right.

Christopher followed her remains to the graveyard one cold winter's day, and the occasion was the nearest he had ever come to appearing with her in public.

At the graveside he joined with gusto in the singing of "Come, Ye Disconsolate", and then he lowered himself into the grave, took a screw driver and screwed the lid of the rough-box tight into place, then took a spade and helped in the ghastly practice of throwing the loose earth back into the hole. Having thus committed his better half to earth, he returned, let us write not joyfully, to his widowed fireside.

And what a fireside, compared with the box stove of every other house in the neighbourhood! It was constructed of stone cut roughly and large enough to receive a stick of cord-

wood. The mantelpiece was decorated with an old musket, a powder horn, a mug or two, and several churchwarden pipes. For Christopher smoked inordinately, morning, noon and night. And he took great pains in the preparation of his tobacco, all of which he grew in his own garden, giving much time and consideration to every stage of its development, from seedling to drying rack. In holding his attention tobacco almost divided honours with cider.

Cider, however, was Christopher's pet lamb. Of it he was a connoisseur. And well so. For he had an ample orchard, and the cider mill was on the corner of his farm, next to the village. From fresh cider in autumn he had this cheering beverage in several degrees of potency up to five years in wood. And it was his delight to produce a jug of it every time anyone appeared at his door, and nothing gave him greater joy than the manœuvres of the one who would dare to imbibe freely of the five-year-old extract. It was his boast that he could drink a quart of his hardest cider and never feel it and that there wasn't another man in those parts who could drink even a pint and remain upright.

Cider affected greatly the momentum of Christopher's life. For with it he seemed to be perpetually saturated. He sat down to breakfast always with a jug of it at his elbow. A stone jar accompanied him to the fields. At noon he drank freely of it before eating and again after eating. He kept cider by him during the afternoon; and in the evening, when the chores were done, especially in winter, he loved to stretch his huge legs in front of the open fire, dreaming or cajoling or cursing, according to his humour and the character of his audience. If his audience consisted of his wife and two sons and two daughters or any fraction or combination of the five, cursing was in order as an appropriate indulgence. And

what opportunity he had on the rare occasions when his pipe and tobacco were not in place, when the cider was not nipping hot, when the log was not roaring behind the dogs! But, oh, whenever a stranger graced the hearth, whenever two little boys, permitted to pass the night under that roof, found themselves at last cuddled close against that great paunch and listening with ever-increasing interest to the tale of the Hairy Man or of the two bear cubs that found a nest of honey in an old hollow log.

Hollow, indeed, are all the stories told by all the great writers of the world when they are compared with the stories hiccoughed by Christopher Howard as he sat before his fire, sipping betimes from an earthern jug and sending blinding whiffs of smoke between the boys and the tall tallow candle that flickered wistfully in the brass stick upon the mantel. For you could see the Hairy Man in his den away down in the ground and hear him roar should anyone be so bold as to pass that way. And you watched with exquisite terror a little fellow who always carried with him on his adventures a shining tin dipper, for he never knew when he might need a drink, or the protection of sunlight reflected dazzlingly from the tin into the bewildered eyes of some prowling beast. And as he drew nearer and nearer you held your breath and listened eagerly to every word, for you knew that the Hairy Man was crawling yearningly and cunningly up the sides of the well-like entrance to his den and that the moment the little boy, lured on by a determination to see what was in the hole, should come near enough a great hairy hand, with long finger-nails like claws, would dart out and snatch the boy, just as a spider might snatch a gnat that has wandered into the web. But the boy outwits the Hairy Man, for by an adroit movement he flashes some sunlight into the Hairy Man's eyes, and

then during the second or two of blinking he strikes him full on the head with the dipper and sends him kerplump down, down, down to the very bottom of the den. Then was the time to laugh and gloat. And Christopher laughed, too, after first roaring and hiccoughing and drawing with great gusto at the blackened stem of his old clay pipe.

After everyone had settled down again, Christopher would begin to recite in slow, even rhythm:

> There was an old woman all skin and bone,
> Who went one day to church alone.
> As she looked up, as she looked down,
> She saw a corpse upon the groun';
> And going up to it she said,
> "Shall I be like thee when I am dead?"
> "Oh, yes, oh, yes," the corpse it said,
> "Thou shalt be like me when thou art dead."
> And with that she gave a yell and died.

The yell, which was half shriek, that Christopher would emit always made the boys shrink under the skin, and kept ringing in their ears until they would fall asleep, hours and hours afterwards, to dream of goblins and graveyards yawning.

Christopher was born a story-teller. But how often he lacked an audience. Think of all the hundreds of nights that he sat there alone, doing nothing but drinking and smoking and settling down into his thoughts. Perhaps that explains how the cider at last undermined him. But with or without evident cause, he slipped away, and we put what he represented of Devonshire beside the fragment of Cornwall, yonder upon the hill. The spot overlooks what were his own acres, where we used to help ourselves to his marrow fat peas, his tender white turnips, and the Astrachans that hung red and luscious under a harvest moon.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Brass Band

ONE radiant day in April, with the beaver-meadow still wet from the spring freshets, and crows cawing over newly-turned furrows, with, as David Lafortune would express it, all nature asserting herself, Adolph Swartz, a carriage striper, flashed into our midst upon the suspirations of a B-flat cornet.

The cornet with us was still a novelty. We had heard it played as an attraction to an itinerant Punch and Judy show, and once it was a feature at a concert held in the Methodist church. But we were more familiar with the church choir and the fiddle, the Jew's harp and the kazoo, the mouth organ and the comb. Other instruments we knew less intimately. For Tufford's hired man used to sit on the front fence, playing the concertina, and a strolling entertainer once rattled the bones—to our great wonderment and delight.

Nothwithstanding all this, we hadn't any preponderance of musical talent, a condition that Adolph failed to appreciate. Adolph should have known that of bands, perhaps naturally enough, we knew almost nothing, and that as to the psychological effect of massed music we were as innocent as Desdemona.

Innocence, one must confess, is alien to ignorance; and, I fear, of both these deficiencies we were inordinately possessed. Nevertheless we had a natural fondness for music, so that when Adolph proposed to old Charlie that they organize a

brass band, Charlie quit work for three days. With him it was a question of expense. But Adolph felt sure that what they could collect at picnics, tea-meetings and even dances would soon pay for all the instruments they would require. He had brought his own cornet with him, and therefore they would have to buy only a trombone, a clarionet, a flute, a piccolo, an 'alto horn, a baritone and a bass. That, he said, would be a modest beginning; and yet if every player would take a real interest in his instrument they could soon earn a reputation, if not a fortune. As to himself, he wasn't looking for anything. He loved music. Without music, he would just as soon have been dead; with music, life was worth living and even carriage striping had its pleasant aspects.

With this view Charlie was in complete agreement. Work was not everything. You could grub along day in and day out, and in the end you had but six feet of earth. Music, on the other hand, soothed the nerves or stirred the blood or made one see visions. That also is what appealed to Joe Ham. Teaming, Joe had to confess, especially teaming slabs from the quarry, did not provide much opportunity for romance or chivalry—did not even lift one above the dead level. But music—he always had loved music and believed in it. If he could choose, he would play the 'alto horn, because he had heard an 'alto singer once, over in Cheboygan, Michigan, and he couldn't forget it. It reminded Joe, also, of his mother and sister, who used to sing "Robin Adair", taking the soprano and contralto parts, turn about, and bringing tears to everybody. They had, of course, natural voices, and sang entirely by ear.

Singing, and even playing, by ear was the common practice. Many persons, one might boast, could run the scale, but for

real feeling most of us preferred the ear. As to that, Adolph laid down a disquieting rule: Everyone must play by note, with the music in front of him. Adolph explained that the music he would ehoose would be simple. To begin with he would order the scores of only "The Beautiful Blue Danube", "Poet and Peasant", "A Life on the Oeean Wave", "Light Cavalry", and if something a little more ambitious should be desired they might venture upon a modifieation of "William Tell".

William Tell himself was more familiar to us than Rossini's masterpieee; nevertheless we received Adolph's suggestion with approval. There were, however, a few matters to be considered before ordering the instruments and the music. Players had to be found for the bass horn, the elarionet, the trombone, the pieeolo, the flute and the baritone horn. After mueh diseussion, Henry Perkins engaged to play the clarionet, little Jimmy Jackson the piceolo, Jaek Mitehell the trombone, big Bob Burden the baritone horn, old Charlie the bass horn, and the blaeksmith the flute.

The flute, the smith explained, was, like the violin, one of nature's instruments. Its tones were pure, natural, and unaffected by twists or turns or unnatural stops. And while he eould not profess to be a flute player, the smith nevertheless eould elaim some familiarity with the instrument, having had a eousin who had been the ehampion flute-player of all England. This eousin had played the flute eontinuously, without stopping, for eighteen hours, and when the news went abroad that at last he had stopped, the nation as a whole breathed freely onee more, and the Queen telegraphed her congratulations.

Adolph ordered the instruments and the music. Each man was to pay for his own instrument, and the amount was to be returned to him from money collected later on. That was satisfactory for everybody except old Charlie. Charlie explained that he hadn't the change handy and hinted that they all chip in. Whether they did or not, the bass horn arrived with the other instruments, and Charlie received it with many evidences of pride and affection.

Being an expert whistler, Charlie attacked the horn with much confidence. At first he used to sit under his poplars day by day endeavouring to overcome the rapid passage in "Poet and Peasant". Indeed from time to time every instrument in the village could be heard trying this passage, and sometimes, from the inner recesses of Henry Perkins's apple orchard, one could hear issuing the far-reaching notes of the clarionet. They were all practising the rapid passage, and, as Joe Ham observed, blowing themselves into form for the first combined practice.

This practice was, naturally enough, an event of first-rate importance. Everybody knew of it, and everybody was in the village. In a hall situated over the horseshed attached to the hotel the band met. Adolph wore what no doubt once had been a regulation peak cap, with golden braid and buttons, and Henry Perkins had on a fancy skull-cracker. At first, while the members were assembling and while a few of us bolder villagers were quietly finding seats at the back of the hall, there was much tooting and squawking and strumming on the snare drum. If it hadn't been for that recollection I believe I should have overlooked completely little Jimmy Price and his drum. Jimmy took great delight in his skill with the sticks, and during the whole eight weeks of the sum-

mer holidays it was a barren hour indeed that did not hear him beating some measure while old Charlie tooted away on his bass horn, sitting there under the poplars, propped up on a chair, with his heels caught on the bottom rung.

But we must return to the first practice. It was some time before Adolph could get them to start in unison. It should be understood that as he himself played the most important instrument, it was not easy for him to lead and play at the same time. They played fairly well together throughout the first passages, but when they came to that rapid passage, which has been the *bête noir* of many non-professional bands, there was, as our critical church organist, who stood over on the store verandah, said, a ludicrous muddle. Adolph, as might be suspected, finished first. Then in order, one a few notes behind another, came the piccolo, the clarionet and the several horns, right down until old Charlie sounded the last note with a terrific blast which gradually died away into a sort of wheeze.

"I say, boys," said the farrier, who was sitting back with us, listening, "if you can't play, why in blazes don't you sing something?"

With that Adolph became furious. He said it was a fine state of affairs when a band couldn't practice without impertinent interruption. Then he raised his cornet again to his lips, but he was so angry he couldn't take in enough air to produce the sounds. Little Jimmy strummed on the drum, and the clarionet sounded a quick run with some trills. Adolph, doubtless reminded by the sound of the trills, immediately began to distribute fresh sheets of music, and the players saw in front of them the score of "Light Cav-

alry". Adolph explained that this piece is noteworthy because of the introduction of a trumpet-call, because of some trills by the clarionet, but mostly because it opens in D-sharp and makes a sudden change of four tones to B-flat.

This sudden change had more effect on the whole community than any sudden change of weather. For Adolph seemed to find it harder to get all the players to make the change than it was for him to get anything like unison during the rapid passage in "Poet and Peasant". He tried repeatedly to force it into their heads that first night, but, as it sounded to us, the only instruments that realized the change at all were the B-flat cornet and the snare drum. Happily for us, our ears were not appreciatively sensitive, and in time we began to enjoy discord almost as much as we enjoyed harmony.

Time then, as now, had a tendency to heal all wounds, and I really believe that by the time we held the fall fair we were as proud of our band as we were of our Berkshires, our shorthorns and our mangold wurtzels. At any rate, we listened with unfeigned satisfaction to the rendition of "Poet and Peasant", even if old Charlie did lag audibly in the rapid passage, and to "Light Cavalry", especially to Jack Mitchell's splendid production of the trumpet-call. Everybody knew, of course, that it wasn't produced by a real trumpet, that all Jack had in his hands was a slide trombone. But as there is a dark side to everything, so there was a dark side to the band's appearance at the fair. For the news went about that Jack Mitchell, all because he could play the trombone, had got a fine job in the furniture factory at Seaforth. We all hated to think of Jack leaving, but naturally we envied him his job and wished him success. Some of us feared that it

would mean the last of the band, because there was not anyone in sight who could take his place. But it wasn't just Jack who broke up the band, for before long it became known that Jimmy Jackson was a good piccolo player, and he got a job in the packing-house at Mitchell. When Jimmy went, following Jack, our band was pretty badly winged. Adolph tried to hold it together, and would have held it if big Bob Burden hadn't gone to Michigan. With that Adolph himself, perhaps a little weary in well-doing, announced that he had accepted an offer as head striper in the big carriage works at Oshawa. He left within a fortnight.

But bands die hard, and ours was the exception that proves the rule. We never heard it again. But on fine days, above the anvil ringing at the forge, above the reapers humming in the fields, when everybody seemed to be busy with the common affairs of our little life, we could hear old Charlie, under the poplars, tooting his big bass horn. And then, in the evening, when dew was falling and blackbirds whistling in the meadow, we could hear, half a mile away, Henry Perkins piping soft airs to the falling night.

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